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SOCINIANISM
INDEFENSIBLE,
ON THE
GROUND OF ITS MORAL TENDENCY.

PRICE ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE.

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SOCINIANISM
INDEFENSIBLE,
ON THE
GROUND OF ITS MORAL TENDENCY:

CONTAINING
A REPLY
TO
TWO LATE PUBLICATIONS;

THE ONE BY
DR. TOULMIN,

ENTITLED
*The Practical Efficacy of the Unitarian Doctrine
considered ;*

THE OTHER BY
MR. KENTISH,

ENTITLED
*The Moral Tendency of the genuine Christian
Doctrine.*

BY 
ANDREW FULLER.

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M DCC XCVII.



INTRODUCTION.

IT is now more than three years since the first publication of *The Calvinistic and Socinian Systems examined and compared as to their Moral Tendency*. Dr. Toulmin expresses some regret that, at the time he wrote, nothing had appeared in answer to it; and seems disposed to account for this circumstance in a way that may acquit his cause of seeming to be indefensible. Addressing himself to me, he says, “ No one can doubt
“ that the gentlemen, on passages in whose
“ writings many of your reflections are
A “ grounded,

“ grounded, are every way equal to the
“ contest, if they saw fit to enter the lists
“ with you. As they have not done it,
“ I presume they think it sufficient to leave
“ the candid reader to judge between you
“ and them.”*

That these gentlemen, so far as abilities are concerned, are equal to this contest, there can indeed be no doubt; but whether they be *every way* equal to it is another question. It is beyond the power of any man to convert truth into falsehood, or falsehood into truth; and their silence may, for any thing Dr. Toulmin can prove, be owing to the difficulty of the undertaking. One thing is rather remarkable; though Dr. Toulmin has undertaken a defence of Socinianism, yet he has cautiously avoided a vindication of the writings of those gentlemen,

* Page 2.

INTRODUCTION.

iii

tllemen, on which I had animadverted. Such a conduct could not have been pursued by them: if they had written, they must have entered on a defence of their writings, or have given them up as indefensible.

Dr. Toulmin informs us that for his own part, “ It was but lately that the piece
“ fell in his way, so as to find him at
“ leisure to read it.”* This undoubtedly is a sufficient apology so far as it respects himself; and if he or his colleague Mr. Kentish have but overturned the substance of the piece against which they have written, time, and other circumstances are of small account. If the opinion of *Reviewers* on these performances be of any weight, it must be concluded that they have done this at least. *The Analytical and Monthly Re-*
views, with The Protestant Dissenters’ Ma-

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gazine,

* Page 1.

gazine, have each bestowed on one or other of them their strong and unqualified approbation. Whether their critiques have been of any advantage to the cause I may hereafter enquire ; at present I shall proceed to examine what is advanced by each of my opponents in their order.

4 OC 58

CONTENTS.

CONTENTS.

Page.

*I*NTRODUCTION.

REPLY to Dr. TOULMIN.

SECTION I.

The Ground of Argument stated and defended. 1—13

SECTION II.

*Farther Remarks on Dr. Toulmin's Replies
to his Animadversions. His Complaint
of the Attack not being made on the fun-
damental Principles of his System.* 13—16

*The Principles of Calvinism not the only springs
of Piety.* - - - 16—17

*The Want of Piety tacitly admitted by Dr.
Toulmin.* - - - 17—19

His

	Page.
<i>His Method of accounting for it ruinous to his</i>	
<i>Cause</i> - - - -	19, 20
<i>His Method of accounting for the unsuccessful-</i>	
<i>ness of their preaching.</i> - -	20—23
<i>Complaint of being called Socinians, and Plea</i>	
<i>for being called Unitarians.</i> -	23—25
<i>Socinianism leads to Deism</i> - -	25—29
<i>Case of the Puritans and Socinians dissimilar.</i>	29—32
<i>Grounds of Love to Christ.</i> - -	32—34
<i>Dr. Toulmin's Complaint of Injustice.</i>	34
<i>On the Criminality of Error, and judging the</i>	
<i>Heart.</i> - - - -	34—41

APPENDIX,

<i>Containing Remarks on Dr. Toulmin's review</i>	
<i>of the Aets of the Apostles.</i> -	42—52

REPLY

REPLY to Mr. KENTISH.

	Page.
<i>He begs the Question in his Title Page</i>	53
<i>Declines a full Enquiry on the Subject.</i>	54—56
<i>The concluding Passage of Letters on Socinianism defended against the Charges of Mr. Kentish, and the Reviewers.</i>	57—60
<i>Reply to Mr. Kentish's six previous Remarks.</i>	60—65
<i>His four Heads of Enquiry.</i> - -	66
I. <i>On the divine, the social, and the personal Virtues. On Love to God.</i> -	66—80
<i>Love to Christ.</i> - - -	80—89
<i>The Fear of God.</i> - - -	89—91
<i>Confidence in God.</i> - - -	91
<i>Trusting in Christ.</i> - - -	91—92
<i>His Appeal to Fact.</i> - -	92—95
<i>On the Innocence of Error.</i> -	95—101
<i>His Appeal again to Fact.</i> - -	101—105
II. <i>On the Tendency of the Unitarian Doctrine to assist, support, and console, under Temptations, Afflictions, and Death.</i>	105—107

III. On

	Page.
III. <i>On the Conversion of Profligates and</i>	
<i>Unbelievers.</i> - - -	107—110
IV. <i>On Veneration for the Scriptures</i>	110—116
<i>Remark on the Meaning of John xiv. 28.</i>	
<i>My Father is greater than I.</i>	117
<i>Review of the Reviewers.</i> -	118—122

4 OC 58

ERRATA.

- Page 17, line 25, for *latter* read *later*.
 — 25, line 19, for *do* read *no*.
 — 28, line 13, dele *of*.
 — 29, line 3, after *ice* put a :
 — 36, to 40, for *Criminal Error*, read
 The Criminality of Error.
 — 55, line 30, for *their* read *the*.
 — 95, line 17, for *man* read *men*.
 — 96, line 4, read *Gospel to be sinful*.
 — 100, line 21, for *his* read *this*.
 — 102, line 22, read *fact*, *that*.
 — 103, line 14, for *should* read *shall*.

A REPLY

A
REPLY
TO
DR. TOULMIN'S
PRACTICAL EFFICACY
OF THE
UNITARIAN DOCTRINE,
&c. &c.

SECTION I.

*On the Ground of Argument used in this Controversy,
and the Attempts of our Opponents to shift it.*

WHEN I first formed a design of writing against Socinianism, I perceived, that although the Holy Scriptures were treated by Socinian writers with great disrespect in various instances, yet they were generally the ultimate tribunal to which the appeal was made. The object of the controversy on both sides seemed to be to ascertain their *true meaning*. For this purpose two general methods had been adopted: First, arranging the various passages of Scripture which relate to the subject, and reasoning upon them. Secondly, examining in what sense Chris-

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tians, in the early ages of Christianity, understood them.

The first is the common way of deciding controversies in divinity, and a very good way it is, if fairly conducted. I had several objections, however, against pursuing it in this instance. First, it was ground which was already fully occupied. Able writers on both sides had gone over all the passages of Scripture relating to the subject; and many of them had nearly exhausted their genius in reasoning upon the scope of the sacred writers, and in criticising upon the original language. Secondly, I perceived that Socinian writers had got into such an unwarrantable habit of criticising upon the sacred writings, that the plainest passages could not stand before them; whole chapters and whole books were cashiered as spurious; and even the whole Bible was declared to be "obscure," and "never designed to decide upon controverted questions in religion and morality.*" It appeared to me of but little account to reason upon texts of Scripture, when the Scripture itself, whatever might be its meaning, was virtually disallowed.

As to the last of these methods, it was not within my province. Besides, it appeared to me, that whatever pleasure we may feel in tracing the history of early opinions, and whatever good purposes may be answered by a work of this nature, if impartially conducted; yet it can afford

* *Monthly Review enlarged*, Vol. x. p. 357.

ford no proper criterion of what is the apostolic doctrine. Christians in early ages were as liable to err as we are, and in many instances they did err, so as to contradict the Scriptures, and one another.

Thinking on these things, it occurred to me that there was another method of reasoning, distinct from those which have been already mentioned, viz. By enquiring—*What is that doctrine, in the present day, which is productive of the best moral effects?* Several considerations induced me to prefer this ground of reasoning in the present case to either of the other two. First, It would serve to ascertain what was the apostolic doctrine as well as the former of them, and much better than the latter. If, for example, in discoursing on the vines and fig-trees which formerly grew in the land of Canaan, a dispute should arise whether they resembled this or that species now growing in other countries, one way of deciding it would be to compare the fruits. If the fruit of one species could be proved to possess a much nearer likeness than the fruit of another, that would tend to decide the controversy in its favour. Secondly, An inquiry into the moral tendency of the different doctrines would not only serve as a medium of ascertaining which of them was the apostolic doctrine, but would also prove *the truth of that doctrine*, and its *divine original*: for it is a principle so deeply engraven on the human mind, that whatever doctrine is productive

of good fruits must in itself be good, and have its origin in God, that very few writers, if any, would dare to maintain the contrary. I perceived, therefore, if I could not only prove that what is commonly called Calvinism is most productive of effects similar to those which sprang from the doctrine of the Apostles, but also exhibit them in such a light as I went along, as that they should approve themselves to every man's conscience, I should thereby cut off the retreat of those Socinian writers, who, when their doctrine is proved to be antisciptural, forsake Christian ground, and take shelter upon the territories of deism; degrading the Bible as an "obscure book," taxing its writers with "reasoning inconclusively," and declaring that its "nature and design was "not to settle disputed theories, or decide upon "controverted questions in religion and morality." I knew well, that though they dared to write degradingly of the Scriptures, and of the sacred writers, yet they dare not professedly set themselves against morality. Thirdly, The judging of doctrines by their effects is a practice warranted by Scripture: *By their fruits ye shall know them.* A very able writer, in a discourse on this passage, has shewn, that "the rule here given "by our Saviour is the best that could have been "given; that it is sufficient to distinguish truth "from error; and that it is in fact the rule by "which all good men, and, indeed, mankind "in general, do judge of religious principles
" and

“ and pretensions.*” Fourthly, I supposed that such a method of reasoning would be more interesting to the public mind, having never before, to my recollection, been adopted as the ground of any particular treatise on the subject. Fifthly, It was ground upon which there was room for common Christians to stand and be witnesses of the issue of the contest, which, while the controversy turned upon the opinion of the Fathers, or the construction of a text of Scripture, was not the case. Sixthly, It was a ground of reasoning to which our opponents could not fairly object, seeing they had commenced an attack upon it, charging the Calvinistic system with “ gloominess,” “ bigotry ” and “ licentiousness;” with being “ averse to the love of both God and man,” and “ an axe at the root of all virtue.”

These were the principal reasons which induced me to prefer the ground of argument on which I have proceeded. I would not be understood, however, as expressing the least disrespect towards the works of those who have proceeded on other grounds. Let the subject be examined in every point of view. Every author has a right to choose his ground of reasoning, provided it be a fair one; and that which may be unsuitable to the turn and talents of one person may be suitable to those of another. If the Reader wish to see the present controversy pursued on the grounds of scripture-

* See Dr. WITHERSPOON'S “ *Trial of Religious Truth by its Moral Influence.*”

scripture-testimony, and the opinions of early ages, he may consult to great advantage, a late very able and elaborate work of Dr. Jamieson, entitled, *A Vindication of the Doctrine of Scripture, and of the primitive Faith, concerning the Deity of Christ, in Reply to Dr. Priestley's History of early Opinions*, 2 vols. octavo.

Knowing somewhat of the abilities of the writers on the other side, and their readiness on all occasions to defend their cause, I did not expect to escape their censure. I laid my accounts, that what I advanced would either be treated as unworthy of notice; or if any answer was written, that the strength of the arguments would be tried to the uttermost. In both these particulars, however, I have been mistaken. They have not treated it as unworthy of notice. They have acknowledged the contrary. And as to trying the strength of the arguments, I must say, that Doctor Toulmin has not so much as looked them in the face. On the contrary, though *the Practical Efficacy of the Unitarian Doctrine* is the title of his performance, yet he acknowledges his design is to "supercede the examination of that comparison into which I had fully entered"*—that is, to relinquish the defence of the practical efficacy of his principles, and to reason entirely upon another ground. Mr. Kentish is the only writer who has pretended to encounter the argument. Whether he has succeeded,

* Page 5.

ceeded, will be hereafter examined. At present I shall attend to Dr. Toulmin.

This writer observes at the outset, that, "the
" Title prefixed to his Letters will lead the reader
" to expect from them chiefly the discussion of
" one point ; but that a point of great im-
" portance in itself, and the main one to which
" a reply to Mr. Fuller's work need to be
" directed."

Now, Reader, what would you have expected that *one point* to be ? The title prefixed to his letters, recollect is this ; *The Practical Efficacy of the Unitarian Doctrine considered*. Would you not have supposed that the Doctor was going to offer evidence in favour of the practical efficacy of *Modern Unitarianism* ? From the title of his book, could you have expected any other than an exhibition of the most forcible *arguments* in favour of the holy tendency of his principles, together with a number of undoubted *facts*, in which their efficacy has appeared, sufficient, at least, to confront the evidence alleged on the other side ? How great then must be your disappointment to find him employed in " pro-
" ducing evidence in support of his opinion
" from *passages of Scripture* ;" and in proving, what no body calls in question, that the preaching of the *Apostles* was productive of great moral effects !

Dr. Toulmin, it should seem, can find no such fruits of Socinian doctrines as will support
an

an appeal, and, therefore, is under the necessity of going seventeen hundred years back in search of examples. But are those examples in point? Were the principles of Christians in the apostolic age the same as those of Socinians? With what face can Dr. Toulmin *take it for granted* that they were, or even go about to *prove* it as a medium of establishing the practical efficacy of modern Unitarianism?

When the grand end of a controversy is to determine a principle, a writer who assumes that principle as a medium of proof, is guilty of *begging the question*: and if, in order to escape the public censure, he endeavour to give evidence of this principle from *some other source of argument* than that which he professes to answer, he is guilty of *shifting* the ground of the controversy, and by so doing, virtually gives up his cause as indefensible.

This is exactly the case with Dr. Toulmin. The doctrine of the Apostles is allowed on both sides to have produced great moral effects. The object of the controversy was to ascertain *what that doctrine was*. The medium of proof which I had adopted, and to which Dr. Toulmin, if he pretended to write an answer to me, ought to have confined himself, was the *effects* which it produced. I attempted to prove that the Apostolic and Calvinistic doctrines are nearly similar, from the familiarity of their effects; and that the Apostolic and Socinian doctrines are dissimilar

milar, from the dissimilarity of their effects. To have answered this reasoning, Dr. Toulmin should have proved, either that the effects of the Calvinistic doctrine are *not* similar to those which attended the doctrine of the Apostles, and that the effects of the Socinian doctrine *are* so; or else, that a similarity of effects is not a proper ground from which to infer a similarity in the nature of the doctrines. His attempting to prove the practical efficacy of the Unitarian doctrine by assuming that the Apostles were Unitarians, in his sense of the term, is nothing better than *begging the question*: and his endeavouring to screen himself from this reproach by labouring to prove the point in dispute, from a review of the Acts of the Apostles, let his reasonings be ever so just, is foreign from the purpose: it is *shifting the ground of the argument*: it is declining to meet the inquiry on the ground of moral tendency, and substituting in its place *Observations on the meaning of Scripture-testimony*; which to all intents and purposes is relinquishing the practical efficacy of modern Unitarianism as indefensible. The plain language of his performance is this: There are no examples to be found of any considerable moral influence which the Unitarian doctrine has had upon the hearts and lives of men of late ages, and therefore I have had recourse to the preaching of the Apostles, and have endeavoured to prove that they were Unitarians.

If Dr. Toulmin thought the moral tendency of a doctrine an improper medium of proof, why did he not professedly decline it? Why did he not acknowledge that Dr. Priestley was wrong in challenging an enquiry on such a ground? And why did he entitle his performance, *The Practical Efficacy of the Unitarian Doctrine*? This piece does not answer to its title. It ought rather to have been called, *An Enquiry into the Doctrines which the Primitive Preachers delivered, by a Review of the Acts of the Apostles*. The practical efficacy of either doctrine makes no part of his argument, and occupies scarcely any place in his performance, except the title-page; and there is reason to think it would not have been there but for the sake of its wearing the *appearance* of an answer to the piece against which it is written.

I am not obliged by the laws of controversy to follow Dr. Toulmin in his review of the history of the Acts of the Apostles; nor is it my intention to be diverted from the subject by the manœuvres of any opponent. The only notice I shall take of this part of his performance will be in a few pages in the form of an *appendix*, as being a subject beside the question; and that merely to shew, as a thing by the bye, that even upon his own ground his cause is indefensible.

An anonymous writer in the *Analytical Review*,* discovers a similar inclination with that of Dr. Toulmin to *shift the ground of the controversy*; but with

* Vol. xvii. p. 183, 184.

with this difference: the Reviewer openly avows his dislike of the medium of proof which I have adopted, calling it "a fallacious test," and recommending it to all parties, "instead of asking " *by whom* any system is professed, to confine " themselves to the single inquiry, by *what evidence* it is supported:" whereas Dr. Toulmin, though he discovers the same dislike to the ground of argument on which I have proceeded, yet has not the ingenuoufness to acknowledge it; but *pretends* to reason upon the practical efficacy of his principles, while, in fact, he has utterly relinquished it, and endeavoured to establish his system upon another ground.

The writer above-mentioned having quoted the concluding paragraph of my letters, calls it "an unfounded and presumptuous sentence, " pronounced upon the *hearts* of those who " adopt Socinian principles," and insinuates that I must have written in *a bad spirit*. Before I have finished these pages, I shall have occasion to defend the passage referred to more particularly. At present, I only observe, that taken in its connection, it amounts to no more than this; that *if* Socinianism be an immoral system, immoral dispositions are the avenues which lead to it: and it is possible, that this writer, notwithstanding what he has said under cover, might be ashamed to come forward, and in a publication to which he should prefix his name, avow his denial of this proposition.

This Reviewer wishes to have it thought, that the moral effects produced by a doctrine form no part of the evidence by which it is supported: that is to say, he wishes to shift this ground of argument as unsuitable to his purpose. If the effects of a doctrine upon the hearts and lives of men be no proper ground of argument, why are we directed by our Lord to judge of false teachers by their fruits? and why were not the same observations made while Socinians were throwing out their accusations of immorality against the Calvinists? Writers may rave like furies against them, and be applauded by Socinian Reviewers.* But a single attempt to repel these shafts of calumny, and to *prove* from facts which no one has yet undertaken to dispute, that immorality attaches to the other side, quite alters the nature of things: lo, then the ground of argument is unfair, and the writer must be a man of a bad spirit!

About forty years ago, the Socinians, and those who veered towards their sentiments, in the Church of Scotland, are said to have attacked the Calvinistic system with various kinds of weapons. Amongst others, they abounded in the use of ridicule: so much indeed, that they seemed disposed to adopt Lord Shaftsbury's maxim, that "Ridicule is the test of truth." At this juncture, Dr. WITHERSPOON, as it is supposed, published

* See *Monthly Review* for July 1792. On Lewelyn's Tracts, page 226.

published his *Ecclesiastical Characteristics*, in which he successfully turned their weapon upon themselves. The effect of that performance was very considerable: a dead silence succeeded its publication: *none moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped*: but they comforted one another by suggesting, that the author of the *Characteristics* "must be a man of a bad heart!"

SECTION II.

Containing farther Remarks on Dr. Toulmin, with Replies to various of his Animadversions.

DR. Toulmin gives us, at the outset of his performance, a short account of the "fundamental principles" of his scheme. These, he tells us, are, "that there is but ONE God, the sole former, supporter, and governor of the universe, the ONLY proper object of religious worship; and that there is but one Mediator between God and men, the MAN Christ Jesus, who was commissioned by God to instruct men in their duty, and to reveal the doctrine of a future life.*" He afterwards complains, that, "instead of applying my arguments against these principles, I have brought forward particular

“ ticular positions, scattered through the works
“ or discourses of several eminent persons, known
“ and able advocates of the Unitarian faith,
“ which have no immediate and direct connec-
“ tion with the first principles of it.” These
positions, he observes, “ might, or might not be
“ true, and the truth of the great doctrines of
“ the unity of God, and the humanity of Christ,
“ remain in either case unaffected by it.*” The
unity of God and the humanity of Christ, then,
it seems, are the principles which I ought to
have attacked: that is to say, I ought to have at-
tacked principles which I profess to believe, and
not those which I profess to disbelieve! Dr.
Toulmin seems disposed to be on the *safe* side.
By avoiding a defence of those positions which
are quoted from the principal writers of the
party, and adopting the words of Scripture as
the medium by which to express his sentiments,
taking it for granted as he goes along, that these
scripture-expressions are to be understood in his
sense of them; his work becomes very easy,
and very pleasant. But thinking people will re-
mark, that by so doing he has retired from the
field of controversy, and taken refuge upon neu-
tral ground. Dr. Toulmin knows that I shall not
dispute with him the apostolic position, that *there*
is one God and one Mediator between God and men,
the man Christ Jesus; and his taking it for grant-
ed, that these and other Scriptures convey his
peculiar

peculiar sentiments, namely, that the Unity of God is *personal*, and that Christ is *merely* a man, is *begging the question*, a practice to which he is more than a little addicted.

What would Dr. Toulmin have said, if I had alleged that Socinians, instead of attacking the positions of the leading writers amongst the Calvinists, ought to have attacked our first principles, such as the following: there is *a Father, a Son, and a Holy Ghost, in whose name we are baptized—the word was God—Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures?* And if to this I had added, “ We think it a just ground of boast that
“ we can express our fundamental opinions in
“ the words of Scripture;*” would he not have replied to this effect; ‘ We do not deny any one
‘ of your positions. These are not your distinguishing principles; but are such as are allowed
‘ on both sides. *It is the sense which you put upon*
‘ *these passages of Scripture* which constitutes your
‘ first principles, and the points of difference between us. You ought not to expect that we
‘ should attack the words of Scripture; for it is
‘ not Scripture, but your *glosses* upon it, that we
‘ oppose; and it is mean in you to *beg the question*, by taking it for granted that your sense
‘ of these passages is the true one: it is no other
‘ than shrouding your obnoxious glosses under
‘ the sacred phraseology of Scripture; and it be-
‘ trays

* trays an inclination in you to impose upon us
 * the one under the form of the other.'

No man who striveth for the mastery is crowned, except he strive lawfully. If a Grecian combatant had quitted the ground marked out for the contest, like Dr. Toulmin, he would not only have lost the prize, but would have been struck out of the list of honourable competitors.

Dr. Toulmin labours to prove that there are certain principles that are productive of piety, which are not peculiar to Calvinists or Socinians, but are common to both; and mentions several devotional treatises of Calvinistic writers, in which these are the only principles insisted on.* And what if this be granted? I never said that the distinguishing principles of Calvinism were the *only* sources of holy practice. On the contrary, the being of a God, which we hold in common with the Deists, is the foundation-stone in the great fabric of piety and virtue. This, however, I must observe, that the most important truths, when accompanied with great errors, are retained to but very little purpose in comparison of what they are when accompanied with other truths. Divine truths in this respect resemble divine precepts: they are so connected together, that he who offends in one point is, as it were, guilty of all. It is thus that that one great truth, the being of a God, is of but very little use to Deists who reject his word: and I
 may

may add, it is thus that the doctrine of a future life loses almost all its effect in the hands of both Deists and Socinians. Dr. Toulmin will admit the propriety of this remark as it respects the former:* and if Dr. Priestley's *Sermon on the Death of Mr. Robinson* may be considered as a specimen of the Socinian doctrine of a future life, there can be but little doubt of the latter.†

In introducing the above remarks, Dr. Toulmin tells us his design is to prove “ that the “ Calvinistic system is not essential to devotion.”‡ Truly our opponents are of late become moderate in their demands. Heretofore, Calvinism was “ unfriendly to the love both of God and man, “ and an axe at the root of all virtue:” but now, it seems, it is allowed to have a tendency in favour of devotion, and all that is argued for is, that it is “ *not essential*” to it.

After holding up the character of several Socinians as eminent for piety and virtue, Dr. Toulmin observes, that “ if the number of excellent “ characters should not be so great as amongst “ other denominations—a cause of this is easily “ to be assigned: the number of Socinians hath “ always, in the latter ages of the Church, borne “ a small proportion to the number of Trini-

D

tarians

* See his *Dissertation on the internal Evidences and Excellencies of Christianity*, p. 246. note.

† See Reflections upon it near the end of my xivth Letter on Socinianism,

“ tarians and Calvinists ; and the number of fin-
 “ cere, conscientious persons, attentive to the
 “ cultivation of pious affections, hath borne a
 “ small proportion to those who have been no-
 “ minal Socinians or Calvinists.*” It was no
 part of my plan to examine the good or bad
 conduct of individuals, whether they were Soci-
 nians or Calvinists : it was the *general body* from
 which I proposed to form an estimate.

As to Dr. Toulmin's attempt to reduce the
 state of Socinians and Calvinists to a level, it
 comes too late. His brethren have acknowledged
 that “ rational Christians are often represented
 “ as indifferent to practical religion :” nor have
 they denied the charge ; or alleged that they are
 no more so than is common with other denomi-
 nations of Christians ; but on the contrary, have
 tacitly admitted it, by endeavouring to *account*
 for it. Nay, why need I go back to the acknow-
 legements of Mr. Belsham or Dr. Priestley ? Dr.
 Toulmin himself has in effect acknowledged the
 same thing : he also goes about to *account* for the
 defect in devotion among Socinians compared
 with Calvinists, in such a way as shall not be
 disparaging to the principles of the former with
 respect to their influence on the pious feelings.
 “ They,” he says, “ deeply engaged in the in-
 “ vestigation of truth, absorbed in gaining just
 “ ideas, may have been necessarily betrayed into
 “ a neglect of the culture of the heart and af-
 “ fections.”

“ fections.”* These methods of *accounting* for things, whether just or not, are plain indications of *the existence of the fact* accounted for: all attempts therefore to disown or palliate it are nugatory and vain.

But let us examine Dr. Toulmin’s method of accounting for the defect of devotion amongst Socinians.—They are so absorbed in the acquisition of truth, it seems, as to neglect the culture of the heart, yea, necessarily to neglect it. This is somewhat strange. Truth and righteousness used to be reckoned friendly to each other; but of late, it seems, the case is altered. Dr. Priestley and Mr. Belsham have taught us, that *indifference to religion is friendly to the acquisition of truth*; and Dr. Toulmin completes the scheme, by teaching us that *the acquisition of truth is friendly to indifference to religion*; or, which is the same thing, that *it leads to the neglect of cultivating holy affections*. Say, Reader, can that be truth, evangelical truth, which is thus acquired, and which thus operates? The knowledge of Christ’s doctrine was formerly promoted by *doing his will*: and being known, it invariably wrought in a way of righteousness.

I know indeed that persons deeply engaged in *polemics*, whatever cause they espouse, are in danger of neglecting the culture of the heart: but whatever allowances require to be made on one side of a controversy ought equally to be made

on the other. Unless Dr. Toulmin means to acknowledge that on account of the peculiar difficulty of defending their cause they have had greater labour, and more "absorbing" application than their opponents, he cannot therefore account for their defects from their *polemical* engagements. The "investigation" to which he refers must be *private*, like that of the noble Bereans: but serious investigation of divine truth has not been used to produce the effect which Dr. Toulmin ascribes to it, but the reverse. The deeper the primitive Christians drank into it, the more powerfully it operated; *changing them into the same image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of God. Grace and peace were multiplied in them by the knowledge of God, and of Jesus their Lord.* What strange fatality is it that hangs about Socinianism? It seems doomed to die by its own hands!

That Dr. Toulmin's sentiments have produced glorious effects in turning sinners to righteousness, is manifest, if he may but take for granted, or be allowed to have proved, that these were the sentiments of the Apostles: but if this be not allowed him, and he be asked for proof of any such effects arising from Socinianism, or as he would call it, Modern Unitarianism, here he scarcely pretends to any thing of the kind. He endeavours however to account for the contrary, from "Circumstances not included in the nature of the doctrine, or its inefficiency." "There are times," he observes, "in which men hear
" not

“ not Moses and the Prophets.—The flock of
“ Christ, while he was upon earth, was a little
“ flock.—He lamented the unsuccessfulness of
“ his own preaching—and the preaching of the
“ Apostles was not always successful.*” All this
is true, and proves that the success of any doctrine depends upon something else than merely its being adapted to the end. But can it be said of the Apostles’ doctrine, that *there never was a time in which it was remarkably blessed to the conversion of sinners?* Dr. Toulmin admits the contrary: but to what period will he refer us when Socinianism was productive of such effects? If the doctrine of our opponents be the same for substance as that of the Scriptures, is it not surprising that, ever since the times of the Apostles, “ circumstances” should have existed to counteract its efficacy; or if this were admissible, is it not still more surprising, that those very effects should, since that time, have been transferred to a false doctrine, a mere corruption of Christianity?

But “ the unsuccessfulness,” it is pleaded, “ may in some degree be imputed to the conduct
“ of those who, instead of refuting their doctrine
“ by plain, scriptural, and sound argument, give
“ representations of it that are invidious, raise
“ prejudices against it, and prevent its having a
“ fair hearing.” A part of this charge is exhibited against me for representing their “ congregations as gradually dwindling away, their
“ principles

* Page 8, 9, and 39.

“ principles as having nothing in them, com-
 “ paratively speaking, to alarm the conscience,
 “ or interest the heart, and their sincerity, zeal,
 “ and devotion, as on a footing with those of
 “ Saul the persecutor.*” As to the *last* of these
 representations, the whole of what I have sug-
 gested is to prove, that a species of devotion may
 exist which is anti-evangelical; and therefore
 that the mere existence of devotion, irrespective
 of its nature and effects, is no evidence in favour
 of the principles from which it arises. And as
 to the whole of them, the only question is, whe-
 ther they be true? If I have given false and in-
 vidious representations, they are capable of be-
 ing proved such; and if the arguments which I
 have used be not plain, sound, and scriptural,
 they are the more easily overturned. It is rather
 singular, however, that those facts which I al-
 leged to have existed *at the time I wrote*, should
 be attributed in any degree to me. And why
 have not the same effects been produced upon
 Calvinistic congregations? Dr. Toulmin well
 knows it has not been for want of the strongest
 representations, both from the pulpit and the
 press, of the immoral tendency of their principles.
 There is no system of religion that has suffered a
 larger portion of obloquy in the present century.
 Preachers, Writers, and Reviewers, of almost
 every description, have thought themselves at
 liberty to inveigh against ‘ the gloomy, licen-
 ‘ tious,

'tious, and blasphemous doctrines of Calvin.' And yet we have experienced very little, if any, injury from these representations. Common people do not pay much regard to what is alleged by writers; they judge of the tree by its fruits. It is thus, as we reckon, that the accusations of our opponents have had but very little effect upon us: and if ours against them were not founded in truth, they would in like manner fall to the ground.

Dr. Toulmin complains of my using the term *Socinians*, as being a term of reproach.* For my own part, I would much rather call them by another name, if they would but adopt a fair one. Let them take a name that does not assume the question in dispute, and I would no longer use the term *Socinians*. But Dr. Toulmin seems to think that there is no necessity for this: "The name," he says, "by which we choose to be called, is, you are sensible, that of Unitarians.†" True; I am sensible that this is the name by which they choose to be called; but it is rather surprising to me, that Dr. Toulmin should be insensible, that in so doing, they choose also to *beg the question* in dispute. It seems, according to him, that we ought, at the very outset of our controversies, to acknowledge that we worship a plurality of Gods; that is, that our conduct is irrational and unscriptural! He thinks, that for Trinitarians to profess also to be

* Page 41.

† Page 42.

be Unitarians, or to worship but one God, "is
 "strange and contradictory; that it is saying,
 "that they who admit a threefold division, or
 "distinction, in the divine nature, hold the same
 "tenet with those who contend for its simple
 "unity.*" I know not who they are that admit
 of a division in the divine nature: and those
 who plead for a personal distinction in it, nevertheless
 maintain its simple unity; though they do not consider
 that unity as personal; and consequently do not hold
 the same tenet with their opponents.

What is it that Dr. Toulmin desires, unless it be
 that we should grant him the question in dispute?
 Where a gentleman can be so very condescending
 as in this manner to solicit for a name, it grates
 with my feelings to give him a denial. He must be
 reminded, however, that he has no right to expect
 it at our hands, much less to charge us with strange
 and contradictory assertions in case of our refusal.

The tone of positivity which our opponents
 assume when defending their notion of the divine
 unity, is rather extraordinary: and if we could
 but be persuaded to admit of confidence in the
 place of evidence, their exclusive right to the
 name of Unitarians, would be fully established.
 "This simple idea of God," says Dr. Toulmin
 from Mr. Lindsey, "that he is one single per-
 "son literally pervades every passage of the sa-
 cred

“cred volumes.*” A common reader of the Bible would not have thought of finding any thing relating to this subject in *every passage*; and in those passages where the subject is introduced, who, except Mr. Lindsey, and Dr. Toulmin, would have asserted that the *personal* unity of the Deity literally pervaded them all? It might have answered a better purpose, if, instead of this general assertion, either of these gentlemen would have pointed us to *one single instance* in which the unity of God is literally declared to be *personal*. Instead of this, we are asked in the words of Mr. Lindsey, “How can we form any notion of the “Unity of the Supreme Being, but from that “Unity of which we ourselves are conscious?†” It is not impossible or uncommon for us to form ideas of three being one, and one three in *different respects*; but what if in this instance we have no distinct idea? We do not profess to understand the mode of the divine subsistence. What notion can either we or our opponents form of the *spirituality* of the Supreme Being; or of any being who is purely *spiritual*? I can form no idea of any being who is not, like myself, corporeal; but it does not follow from thence, either that God must needs be a material being, or that there are no immaterial beings in the universe.

Dr. Toulmin at length comes to the title of my last letter—*The resemblance of Socinianism to*
E Deism,

* Page 45.

† Page 45, note.

Deism, and the tendency of the one to the other. He calls this "a solecism," and charges it with "inconsistency and absurdity." "It implies," he says, "that to receive the divine mission of Jesus has a resemblance to considering him as a deceiver: that to take him as my master, the resurrection and the life, has a tendency to the rejection of him: that to learn of him is to deny him: that to profess to obey him, resembles disobedience: and that to hope for the mercy of God in him will lead me to cast off this hope.*" Surely Dr. Toulmin must feel himself touched on a tender part, or he would not have so far lost the possession of himself as to have suffered this paragraph to escape his pen. Can he seriously think that it is on account of their receiving the divine mission of Jesus, their acknowledging him as their master, the resurrection and the life, their learning of him, professing to obey him, or hoping for the mercy of God in him, that we reckon their system to resemble Deism, or to have a tendency towards it? No, he knows the contrary.

But, "it is a singular circumstance," he adds, "that a resemblance and affinity to Deism should be ascribed to the creed of those amongst whom have arisen the most able critics on the Scriptures, and the most eminent advocates for divine Revelation.†" Most eminent, no doubt, they are, in the opinion of Dr. Toulmin; but let

* Page 45.

† Page 45, 46.

let the eminency of their abilities be what it may, if in criticising and defending the sacred oracles they give up their inspiration; plead that they are interpolated; cashier whole chapters, where they are found to clash with a favourite hypothesis; tax the writers with reasoning inconclusively; declare the whole an obscure book, not adapted to settle disputed theories, or to decide upon speculative, controverted questions, even in religion and morality;—those sacred oracles will not admit them to be friends, but consider them as adversaries in disguise.

I have not attempted, as Dr. Toulmin suggests, to prove the relation of Socinianism to Deism, barely from an agreement in *some instances*; but from instances in which Socinians, by uniting with the Deists, have given up some of the fundamental principles by which Christians have been used to maintain their ground against them. neither is the *success* of our opponents in gaining numbers to their party, and its resemblance in this respect to infidelity, *in itself* considered, alleged as an argument against them: but rather its being amongst the same description of people, mere speculatists in religion; and allowed to arise from a similar cause, namely, *a disregard to religion in general*. I have also attempted to prove, by several arguments, the direct *tendency* of Socinianism to Deism; but of these Dr. Toulmin has taken no notice. I have also appealed to facts; but neither is any notice taken of them. If further

proof were needed, I might now appeal to *more recent facts*.

The new German Reformers, if I am rightly informed, are making swift progress in this direction. *Babrdt*, a little before his death, is said to have published a proposal, that the worship and instructions in churches should be confined to natural religion in which all agree. Last year, my informant adds, an anonymous writer carried the idea farther; he is for banishing from churches, all the theory of natural religion, as there are disputes about a future state, and the providence, perfections, and even existence of God, and that only the duties of self-government, justice, and beneficence, should be taught. Of those who have *lately* joined the standard of infidelity in our own country, is there not a large proportion of Socinians? Have not several of them, who were candidates for the ministry, and even ministers themselves, given up their work, and avowed their rejection of Christianity? It is not in the power of the leading characters amongst them to prevent these things. Socinianism is slippery ground: few will be able to stand upon it. Some few may, and doubtless will; but the greater part, I am persuaded, will either return to the principles which they have discarded, or go farther. Mrs. Barbauld might well represent their situation by that of people "walking over a precipice," and describe "that class called *serious Christians*," amongst them,

as

as "leaning to the safest side." A precipice indeed it is; or rather the declivity of a rock, bulging into the sea, and covered with ice, a few wary individuals may frame to themselves a kind of artificial footing, and so retain their situation, but the greater part must either climb the summit, or fall into the deep.

"The general tenor of your book," says Dr. Toulmin, "and your mode of arguing remind me, Sir, of a piece published in the last century, entitled," "PURITANISME *the Mother;* and SINNE *the Daughter: or a Treatise wherein is demonstrated from twenty, several Doctrines and Positions of Puritanisme, that the Faith and Religion of the Puritans, doth forcibly induce its Professors to the perpetrating of SINNE, and doth warrant the committing of the same.*" "I could wish the piece in your hands, and to see what remarks you would offer on the candour of the imputation, or the conclusiveness of the argument. The same remarks I am inclined to think would supply an answer to the general tenor of your own treatise.*"

I have not seen the piece to which Dr. Toulmin refers; but I am inclined to think I should not be greatly at a loss to vindicate the Puritans from the charge; and that without being necessitated to travel back seventeen hundred years for examples, and to *beg the question* in dispute by taking it for granted, or even undertaking to
prove,

prove, that the Apostles and primitive Christians were Puritans. I have no doubt but the conduct of the accused would bear a comparison with that of their accusers. I could allege from *Mr. Neale's History* of that persecuted people (a work which Dr. Toulmin is now publishing) that, "While
 " others were at plays and interludes, at revels,
 " or walking in the fields, or at the diversions
 " of bowling, fencing, &c. on the evening of
 " the Sabbath, the Puritans, with their families,
 " were employed in reading the Scriptures, singing psalms, catechising their children, repeating sermons, and prayer: nor was this only
 " the work of the Lord's Day, but they had their
 " hours of family devotion on the week days,
 " esteeming it their duty to take care of the souls
 " as well as of the bodies of their servants. They
 " were circumspect as to all the excesses of eating and drinking, apparel and lawful diversions; being frugal in house-keeping, industrious in their particular callings, honest and exact in their dealings, and solicitous to give
 " to every one his own.*" If Dr. Toulmin could fairly allege the same things in behalf of the body of modern Unitarians, he need not "call
 " upon the Churches of Christ in Judea and Samaria†" to bear witness to the holy efficacy of his doctrine.

And why does Dr. Toulmin complain of my
 " mode of arguing?" He might have found examples

* Vol. I. ch. viii.

† Page 39.

amples of it without going back to the days of Puritanism. It is the same mode which has been adopted by his brethren against the Calvinists. They commenced the attack. I have only met them upon their own ground. A large proportion of my *Letters*, it is well known, are written on the defensive : and if in the course of the controversy I have occasionally acted on the offensive, I had a right to do so. Dr. Toulmin's complaining of my " mode of arguing," is as if the Philistines had complained of the unfairness of the weapon by which Goliath lost his head.

I had observed that " it was very common for " those who go over to infidelity to pass through " Socinianism in their way." To this Dr. Toulmin answers, " A similar remark, if I mistake " not, I have seen made on the side of Popery " against the Reformation, that Protestantism was " the pass to Infidelity.*" But what does this prove? The question is, Is such a charge capable of being supported? A few solitary individuals might doubtless be produced; but, in return, I could prove that *a great nation* has been led into Infidelity by Popery, and that the former is the natural offspring of the latter. If Dr. Toulmin could retort the charge against Socinianism with equal success, what he writes might with propriety be called *an answer*. But his reasoning amounts to no more than that of a person, who, being charged with a crime at the bar of his

* Page 48.

his country, should argue that a similar charge had been brought against other people, and that innocent characters had in some instances been wrongfully accused.

As a kind of answer to my XIth Letter, Dr. Toulmin has reprinted in the form of an appendix a piece which he had published some years ago in the Theological Repository, on *The Nature and Grounds of Love to Christ*. But I conceive I might as well reprint my XIth Letter in reply to this, as he this in answer to mine. His piece is not written against the Trinitarian, but the Arian hypothesis; and is pointed chiefly against the pre-existent glory of Christ being represented in Scripture as the ground of love to Him. But this position has little, if any, connexion with our ideas of the subject: for though we contend that Christ did exist prior to his coming into the world; yet we have no idea of making his bare existence, but his glorious character and conduct a ground of love. It is not *how long* Christ has existed, but what he is, and what he has done, that endears him to us. If he be a mere creature, it is of very little account with us whether he be seventeen hundred or seventeen thousand years old.* It is true, the pre-existence of Christ was necessary in order that his coming into the world should be a *voluntary* act, as I have attempted to prove in my XIVth Letter; and his being pos-
fessed

* See Jos. PIKE of Warminster's *Impartial View of the Trinitarian and Arian Scheme*, chap. x.

fessed of a pre-existent glory was necessary that his coming into the world might be an act of *humiliation* and *condescension*, as I have also in the same place attempted to prove it was: and this his voluntary humiliation, notwithstanding what Dr. Toulmin has written, affords a ground of love to Him. No Christian, whose mind is not warped by system, can read such passages as the following without feeling a glow of sacred gratitude.—*Verily he took not on him the nature of Angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham—For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich—who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.** How foreign is this from Dr. Toulmin's assertion, “that the
 “ circumstance of Christ's degradation from a
 “ glorious pre-existent state is never hinted at
 “ when his death is spoken of, though so proper
 “ to cast a glory around it, as illustrating his
 “ grace and philanthropy.†”

If Dr. Toulmin wished to answer my XIth Letter, why did he not prove, that the original *dignity* of Christ's character is never represented in Scripture as the ground of love to him; that

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his

* Heb. ii, 16. 2 Cor. viii, 9. Phil. ii, 6, 7. † Page 61.

his mediation is exhibited in an equally important point of light by the Socinian, as by the Calvinistic scheme; and that the former represents us as equally indebted to his undertaking as the latter?

The "extravagant compliment" to which I referred, and concerning which Dr. Toulmin complains of my not having done him justice,* respected not Mr. Robinson, but his Biographer, whom Mr. Toulmin characterized as "a learned " and sensible writer;" and his performance on *the nature of subscription*, as a work "full of learning, of *all* judicious remarks, and liberal sentiments." I may remark, however, from Dr. Toulmin's account of his regard for Mr. Robinson, that he pays but little respect to the apostolic manner of regarding persons, viz. *for the truth's sake, that dwelleth in them*. Truth had no share in Dr. Toulmin's regard; but *the love of liberty* was substituted in its place, as a companion for piety. "My regard for Mr. Robinson," (he says) "did " not ebb and flow with *his opinions*," (a name by which our opponents choose to call religious principles): "but was governed by the permanent qualities of the man, the friend of liberty and piety, and who had sacrificed much " for conscience.†"

Dr. Toulmin's performance concludes with a quotation from Dr. *Lardner*. There are several sentiments in it which I cordially approve. I cannot,

* Page 50, 51.

† Page 51.

cannot, however, acquiesce in the whole. “ We
“ should be cautious (he says) of judging others
“ ——— God alone knows the hearts of men, and
“ all their circumstances, and is therefore the
“ only judge what errors are criminal, and how
“ far men fall short of improving the advantages
“ afforded them, or act up to the light that has
“ been given them.*” We should, I grant, “ be
“ cautious of judging others;” and I may add,
should never attempt it, *but from their words or
actions*. But if it be presumptuous *in this way*
to judge others, then is the tree not to be known
by its fruits. In this case, though it might be
lawful for Peter to declare to Simon that by his
*thinking that the gift of God might be purchased with
money, he perceived that his heart was not right in
the sight of God*; and for Paul to address Elymas,
on account of his opposition to the Gospel, as
a child of the devil, an enemy of all righteousness, see-
ing they were inspired of God: yet it was ut-
terly wrong for the Bishop of Llandaff to apply
this language to Mr. Paine; and his *apology for
the Bible*, which is generally allowed to be writ-
ten in a very gentle style, must nevertheless be
censured as presumptuous. Upon this suppo-
sition, Dr. Toulmin has written presumptuously,
in affirming, that “ the number of sincere con-
“ scientious persons, attentive to the cultivation
“ of pious affections, hath borne a small propor-
“ tion to those who have been nominal Socinians

“and Calvinists.*” It is presumptuous also in him to complain of the want of *candour* and *justice* in his opponent.† Yea, upon this supposition, it was presumption in the Analytical Reviewer to call what I had written “a presumptuous sentence, pronounced upon the *hearts* of those who adopt Socinian principles.” If it be presumption to judge the hearts of men by their words and actions, what right had he to judge of mine? A presumptuous sentence is a sentence which proceeds from a presumptuous *spirit*. His censure therefore includes the very fault, if it be a fault, against which it is pointed. It resembles the conduct of a man who should *swear* that he disapproves of *oaths*; or who should *falsely* accuse his neighbour of being a *liar*.

If it be presumptuous to judge of the hearts of men by their words and actions, it must be presumptuous to judge of the good or evil of any action. For no action considered separately from its motive is either good or evil. It is no otherwise good or evil than as it is the expression of the heart. To judge an action therefore to be either this or that, is to judge the heart to be so.

I may be told that Dr. Lardner is not speaking of immorality, but of *errors in judgment*. True; but his reasoning would apply to actions as well as errors. The former *may* be as innocent as the latter.

* Page 36.

† Page 39.

latter. The killing of a man, for instance, *may* have arisen from mere accident. It is the motive which governed the action that determines its guilt or innocence; "but God alone knows
"the hearts of men, and all their circumstances,
"and is therefore the only judge what *actions*
"are criminal." In this manner we might censure the proceedings of a jury which should sit in judgment upon a person to determine whether the act by which he has taken away the life of a fellow-creature arose from accident or design.

Who can say, with infallible precision, concerning any action, how far the author of it
"has fallen short of improving the advantages
"afforded him; or how far he has failed of act-
"ing up to the light that has been given him?" If this reasoning, therefore, prove any thing, it will prove that men are utterly incompetent for any kind of judgment in things which relate to good and evil.

A man may err in his notions of morality, as well as concerning evangelical truth: he may think, with some modern unbelievers, that the confining of a man to one woman is unnatural; that fornication is allowable; and that even adultery is but a small crime; and, where it is undetected, no crime at all. Now, if God alone is to judge of these errors, God alone must also judge of the actions resulting from them: for there can be no more of moral evil in the one than in the other. If the former may be innocent,

cent, so may the latter: and all being to us uncertainty, owing to our ignorance of the motive or state of mind from whence such notions were formed, together with the advantages which the party may have possessed, we must, in all such cases, entirely cease from passing censure.

If it be alleged that there are such light and evidence in favour of chastity, that no man can err on that subject, unless his error arise from some evil bias; I answer, this is what, in other cases, is called judging men's hearts; and why may I not as well say, there are such light and evidence in favour of the Gospel, that no man can reject it but from an evil bias? This appears to me to be the truth; and the ground on which unbelief is threatened with *damnation*, and a *denial of the Lord who bought us, followed with swift destruction*.

Far be it from me to indulge a censorious spirit, or to take pleasure in thinking ill of any man. Nay, far be it from me to pass any kind of judgment on any man, further than I am called to do so; and when this is the case, I desire it may always be in meekness and fear, knowing not only that I also am judged of others, but that all of us, and all our decisions must be tried another day, at a higher tribunal.

It may be asked, What call have we to pass any kind of judgment upon those who disown the deity and atonement of Christ? I answer, we are called either to admit them as Fellow Christians
into

into communion with us, or to refuse to do so. We are necessitated therefore to pass some judgment, and this is all that we do pass. We do not pretend to say concerning any individual, that *we are certain that he is not in a state of salvation*: but we say *we cannot perceive sufficient ground to warrant our acknowledging him as a Fellow Christian.*

We must either admit every pretender to Christianity into communion with us, and so acknowledge him as a Fellow Christian; or we shall be accused of judging the hearts of men. The rule by which we admit to fellowship is a *credible profession of Christianity*. There are two things which render a profession credible: First, that the thing professed be Christianity: Secondly, that the profession be accompanied with a practice correspondent with it. If a man say he loves God and lives in malevolence against his brother, all will admit that he ought to be rejected: and though such rejection may include a kind of judgment upon his heart, none will object to our proceedings on this account. But if this be judging the heart, we suppose we have a right, and are obliged, to judge it from *words* as well as from actions. If the profession which a person makes of Christianity do not include what in our judgment is essential to it, we cannot consistently admit him to communion with us, nor acknowledge him as a Fellow Christian. *Our judgment* must be the rule of *our conduct*. If we err,
so

so it is: but we ought not to act in opposition to our convictions. To acknowledge a person as a Fellow Christian, while we consider him as defective in the essentials of Christianity, would be to act hypocritically, and tend to deceive the souls of men.

Some persons have spoken and written as though we *invaded the right of private judgement* by refusing to commune with those who avow Socinian principles. But if a community have not a right to refuse, and even to exclude an individual whose sentiments they consider as subversive of the Gospel, neither has an individual any right to separate himself from a community whose sentiments he considers in a similar light. Provided they would forbear with him, he ought to do the same with them. This principle condemns not only the Reformation from Popery, but all other reformations in which individuals have withdrawn from a corrupt community, and formed one of a purer nature. Under a plea for liberty, it would chain down the whole Christian world in slavery; obliging every community to hold fellowship with persons between whom and them there is an entire want of Christian concord. It aims to establish the liberty of the individual at the expence of that of society. Our opponents however will be silent in this case. They, with proper consistency, persuade their people to come out from Trinitarian communities.* Were I to imbibe

* See Mr. Kentish, p. 44. note.

imbibe their sentiments, I should follow their counsel; and separate myself from those whom *I accounted idolaters*: or if the community should be before-hand with me, and separate me from them, as one whom *they accounted a subverter of the Gospel*, however painful such a separation might prove to my feelings, I should have no just reason to complain.

In our view, our opponents have renounced the principal ideas included in those primitive forms of confession, *Jesus is the Christ—Jesus Christ is the son of God*; and as charity itself does not require us to acknowledge and treat that as Christianity which in our judgment is not so, we think it our duty, in love, and with a view to their conviction, both by our words and actions to declare our decided disapprobation of their principles. We lay no claim to infallibility, any more than our opponents. We act according to our judgment; and leave them to act according to theirs; looking forward to that period when we shall all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.

APPENDIX;

*Containing a few Remarks on Dr. Toulmin's Review
of the Acts of the Apostles.*

FIRST: Let it be observed that Dr. Toulmin, by appealing to the History of the Acts of the Apostles, would seem to be an adherent to Scripture, and to disregard every thing else in comparison with it. But if the system which he espouses be so friendly to the Scriptures, how is it that they are treated with so little respect by almost all the writers who embrace it? And why did not Dr. Toulmin answer my Letter on "Veneration for the Scriptures," No. XII. in which this charge is substantiated?

Secondly: Dr. Toulmin proceeds on the supposition that the history of the Acts of the Apostles is in itself, independent of the other parts of the sacred writings, a complete account of the substance, at least, of what the Apostles preached, and that it ascertains those principles the publication of which preceded the conversions in the primitive age. But why should he suppose this? The book professes to be a History of the *Acts* of the

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the Apostles. As to the *Principles* which operated in producing the great effects of those times, they are occasionally touched; but that not being the professed object of the sacred writer, it is but occasionally. He does not always relate even the substance of what the Apostles preached. For instance, he tells us that Paul preached at Troas until midnight;* but makes no mention of any thing that he taught. He informs us of that Apostle's conversion to Christianity, and makes no mention, it is true, of those principles which I have supposed necessary to repentance and faith, as having had any influence in producing that effect; such as a conviction of the evil nature of sin, our own depravity, &c. and this silence of the sacred writer Dr. Toulmin improves into an argument against me.† But if we hence infer that these principles had no influence in conversion, in that of Saul for example, we must contradict the Apostle's own particular account of this matter which he has stated in the viith chapter to the Romans; where he intimates, that by a view of the spirituality of the divine law he was convinced of his own depravity, and of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and died, as to all hopes of acceptance with God by the deeds of the law.

When any thing is said in the Acts of the Apostles concerning principles, the account is very general.—*They ceased not to teach and preach*

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JESUS

* Ch. xx. 8—12.

† Letter III.

JESUS CHRIST. In Samaria Philip *preached* CHRIST. Unto the Eunuch *he preached* JESUS, and declared that *Christ was the* SON OF GOD. The discourses of the Apostles are frequently called THE WORD OF THE LORD, and THE WORD OF GOD.*

To suppose that the principles which are particularly specified in the History of the Acts were the only ones which were influential in the conversions of those times, would be to exclude, not only those doctrines which are commonly called Calvinistic, but various others which are allowed on all hands to be the first principles of religion; such as the being of a God, the excellency and purity of his moral government, the divine origin of the Old Testament, &c. The Apostles, in preaching to the Jews, did not assert these principles, but they *supposed* them. It were unreasonable to expect they should have done otherwise, seeing these were principles which their hearers professedly admitted: yet it does not follow that they had no influence in their conversion. On the contrary we are assured, that *He who cometh to God must believe that he is*; and that *by the law is the knowledge of sin*. Nor is it less evident, that to embrace the Messiah includes an approbation of those Scriptures which foretold his character and coming.

Thirdly: Though the writer of the Acts of the Apostles does not profess to give us even the substance

* Ch. v. 42. viii. 5, 35, 37. ix. 20. xiii. 5. xiv. 25. xvii. 3.

stance of the ministry of the Apostles, yet he says sufficient to convince an unprejudiced Reader that their doctrine was very different from that of Socinus or of modern Unitarians. It is true they spake of Christ as *a man, a man approved of God by miracles, signs, and wonders, which God did by him*, and taught that *God raised him from the dead*; and if we had denied either of these truths, it would have been in point for Dr. Toulmin to have laboured all through his second and third Letters to establish them. But they taught the proper *deity* as well as the humanity of Christ; and atonement by his death; as well as the fact of his resurrection. They exhibited him as *the Lord* on whose *name* sinners were to call for salvation;* and declared that by the shedding of his blood *his Church was purchased*, and believing sinners *justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses*.†

Peter in his first sermon addressed the Jews upon principles of the truth of which they in their consciences were convinced. *Ye men of Israel*, said he, *hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God by miracles, signs, and wonders which God did by him in the midst of you, AS YE YOURSELVES ALSO KNOW, ye—by wicked hands have crucified and slain*.‡ Upon these principles he grounded others, of which they were *not convinced*; namely,

* Ch. ii. 21. comp. ch. ix. 14. xxii. 16. Rom. x. 12. and 1 Cor. i. 2. † Ch. xx. 28. xiii. 39. ‡ Ch. ii. 22.

namely, his resurrection from the dead,* his exaltation at the right-hand of God,† his being made both Lord and Christ,‡ and of remission of sins through his name.¶ In his next sermon he asserted him to be *the Son of God*,§ *the Holy One*, *and the Just, the Prince, or author of life*, whom they had *killed*, preferring a murderer before him.¶ If Jesus was the *author* of life in the same sense in which Barabbas was the *destroyer* of it, then was the antithesis proper, and the charge adapted to excite the greatest alarm. It was nothing less than declaring to them that in crucifying Jesus of Nazareth they had *crucified the Lord of Glory*; or that the person whom they had slain was no other than the Creator of the world in human nature! In the first instance the Apostle appealed to what the Jews *themselves knew* of Christ; in the last to what *he knew* concerning him, who, with his fellow Apostles, had *beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father*.

Did Peter speak as would a “modern Unitarian,**” when he said to his countrymen, *Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given amongst men, whereby we must be saved?* Such language, I fear, is seldom, if ever, used in their pulpits. It is such, however, as I have never met with in their writings. On the contrary, one of their principal writers

* V. 24—32. † V. 33. ‡ V. 36. ¶ V. 38. § Ch. iii. 13.
¶ Ch. iii. 14, 15. ** Dr. T. p. 14.

writers endeavours to explain it away, or to prove that it is not meant of “salvation to eternal life, “but of deliverance from bodily diseases.*”

Dr. Toulmin finds Stephen before the council, but makes no mention of his death, in which he is described as praying to Christ, saying, *Lord Jesus receive my spirit*—*Lord, lay not this sin to their charge*. Having made a few remarks upon the eighth chapter, he observes, “I next meet “with this Apostle (Peter) receiving an extraor- “dinary commission to preach unto Cornelius and “his house.†” But why does he skip over the ninth chapter, which gives an account of the conversion of Saul? Was it because we there find the primitive Christians described as *calling upon the name of the Lord Jesus?* (ver. 14. 21.) And why does he make mention of “the fine speech “of the Apostle Paul to the Elders of the church “at Ephesus,” and yet overlook that solemn charge, *Feed the Church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood?* ‡ Is it because he thinks, with Dr. Priestley, “that we ought to be exceed- “ingly cautious, how we admit such an expres- “sion?§” That seems to be the reason. But then we ought to be as cautious how we admit the book which contains it.

In preaching to the Jews, the Apostles insisted that *Jesus was the Christ, the promised Messiah, the Son of God*; resting the proof of these asser-
tions

* Dr. Priestley's *Familiar Letters*, No. XIV. † Page 17.

‡ Chap. xx. 28. § *Famil. Illust.* page 36.

tions upon the fact *that God had raised him from the dead*; and Dr. Toulmin reckons this to be "what in modern style is called Unitarianism.*" But this is proceeding too fast. Before such a conclusion can be fairly drawn, it must be proved that these propositions have the same meaning in the Socinian creed, as in that of the Apostles. Let us examine whether that be the case. When they asserted, that *Jesus was the Christ*, the meaning of the terms must be supposed to have been sufficiently understood. When Paul preached at Athens, though he ultimately brought Christ into his discourse, yet he did not use this kind of language. It would have been improper to have done so. The Athenians would not have understood what he meant by *Jesus being the Christ*: but the Jews did; and the ideas which they would attach to this name, must be collected from the means of information which they possessed. If, as Socinians affirm, the *Christ* preached by the Apostles, was only an instructor of mankind; if he suffered martyrdom only in confirmation of his doctrine; and if his being called *the Son of God* denoted him to be nothing more than human; it must be supposed, that these were the ideas which the Prophets had given of the Messiah, which our Lord himself had professed, and which the Jews had understood him to profess. And if all this be true, it must be granted that the Apostles used these terms in the sense of our opponents,

and

and Dr. Toulmin's conclusion, that "their preaching was the same for substance as that of modern Unitarians," is just.—But if the Messiah, prefigured by Jewish sacrifices, and predicted by the prophets, was to take away the sins of the world by being made an atoning sacrifice; if Christ, in professing to be *the Son of God*, professed to be *equal with God*; and if his countrymen generally so understood him, and therefore accused him of *blasphemy*, and put him to death, then it is *not* true that the Apostles could use these terms in the sense of our opponents, and Dr. Toulmin's conclusion is totally unfounded.

The Reader may now judge of the propriety of the following language used by Dr. Toulmin. "If you suppose, Sir, that these sentiments were inculcated and blended with the great truth, the Messiahship of Jesus, it is *supposition* only, which is not supported by the testimony of the historian, nor by the practice of the Apostolic preachers on any other occasion. You may build on suppositions; but I must be allowed to adhere to what is written.*"

Now I appeal to the intelligent Reader, whether Dr. Toulmin has any thing more than *supposition* as the ground of his conclusion, that the Apostles in teaching *that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God*, "taught nothing more than what, in modern style, is called the Unitarian doctrine."

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The only ground for such a conclusion, is, the *supposition* that the Messiah predicted by the Jewish Prophets, was not to become an atoning sacrifice, but a mere instructor of mankind; that he was to be merely a man; that his being called the Son of God denoted him to be nothing more than human; that this was the substance of what he himself professed, and of what the Jews understood him to profess. All this is mere *supposition*, for which not the shadow of a proof is offered; and yet without it, Dr. Toulmin's conclusion must fall to the ground.

Contrary to all this supposition, I take leave to observe, 1. That the Messiah prefigured by the Jewish sacrifices, and predicted by the Prophets, *was* to become a sacrifice of atonement or propitiation for the sins of the world.—*His soul was to be made an offering for sin. The Lord was to lay on him the iniquity of us all. He was the Lamb of God, who was to take away the sin of the world.**—But if the Old Testament representations were in favour of the Messiah's being an atoning sacrifice, the Apostles, in declaring Jesus to be the Messiah, virtually declared him to be an atoning sacrifice.—2. That the Messiah predicted by the Prophets was to be God manifest in the flesh, or God in our nature. Unto the *Son* it was said *Thy Throne, O God, is for ever and ever. The Child born was to be called the mighty God. He who was to feed his flock like a shepherd, to gather the lambs*

* Isaiah liii. 6, 10. John i. 29.

lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, was no other than the Lord God, who would come with strong hand, and whose arm should rule for him. The goings forth of him who was to be born in Bethlehem were of old, from everlasting.*—But if the prophetic representations of the Messiah were in favour of his being God in our nature, the Apostles in declaring Jesus to be the Messiah virtually declared him to be God in our nature.—3. That our Lord, in saying *I am the Son of God*, was understood by the Jews as claiming an equality with God; that he was on this account accused of blasphemy, and finally put to death; and all this without having said any thing that should contradict the idea which they entertained. Jesus said, *My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God. The Jews said, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.*†—But for the Apostles under these circumstances, and without explaining away the supposed blasphemy, to assert that *Jesus was the Son of God*, was the same thing as asserting him to be equal with God: and their calling on his murderers to *Repent and be baptized in his name for the remission of sins*, was calling them to retract their charge of blasphemy, to embrace him in that very cha-

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* Psalm xlv. 6. comp. Heb. i. 8. Isa. ix. 6. xl. 10, 11, Mic. v. 2. † John v. 17, 18. xix. 7.

racter for claiming which they had put him to death, and to place all their *hopes of forgiveness in his NAME by which alone they could be saved.**

From these premises, and not from mere *supposition*, I conclude that the Deity and atonement of Christ were comprehended in the great doctrines of his Sonship and Messiahship.

If Dr. Toulmin's remarks on the Acts of the Apostles are foreign to the argument, much more so are those which respect the concessions of ancient Fathers, and modern Churches and Churchmen. To these I shall make no reply. And though I have so far followed him as in these few pages to reply to some of his observations; yet I desire it may be noticed that I shall not hold myself obliged to pursue this subject any further. If Dr. Toulmin choose to resume the controversy, let him keep to the subject, *viz. The moral tendency of our respective systems.* Any thing beside this will be entitled to no reply.

* Acts ii. 38. iv. 12.

A
REPLY
TO
MR. KENTISH'S
SERMON,
ON THE
MORAL TENDENCY
OF THE GENUINE
CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE,
&c. &c.

MR. Kentish entitles his discourse, *The moral Tendency of the genuine Christian Doctrine*. This title is either *irrelative* to the professed object of his undertaking, or it is a *begging the question*. If he only mean to affirm that the genuine Christian doctrine, be it what it may, is productive of moral effects in those who embrace it, this is what none but a professed infidel would deny. It is a principle which every denomination of Christians admits. It is the datum on which I have proceeded in endeavouring to ascertain what the genuine Christian doctrine is. If therefore Mr. Kentish intends only to prove what his title announces, his performance must
be

be totally *irrelative* to its professed object, and contains no answer to the piece against which it is written. But it is possible, that, by the *genuine Christian doctrine*, Mr. Kentish means what "he sincerely *believes* to be such," or what he calls the Unitarian doctrine. But this is *begging the question* at the outset. Our opponents must surely be reduced to very *necessitous* circumstances, or they would not condescend to such humble methods of establishing their principles.

Mr. Kentish, speaking of my letters on Socinianism, observes, that "it was by no means his intention or his wish to canvas every observation which is there advanced." To canvas every observation might be unnecessary; but an answer to any work ought to enter upon a full and thorough discussion of the principal subjects included in it. A performance that does not require this, requires no answer at all. I cannot think therefore, that either Dr. Toulmin or Mr. Kentish are justifiable in evading the body of the arguments contained in the publication which they attempt to answer. The number of veterans in literary war which are to be found on the side of our opponents, renders it difficult to account for their refusing to hazard a decisive engagement, without imputing it to a conviction that they stand upon *disadvantageous ground*. Dr. Toulmin has proved *his* dislike to it by a barefaced attempt to shift it. Mr. Kentish has not done so: his performance has less evasion, and less

less assuming of the question in debate, and consequently is more respectable than that of his colleague. He keeps upon the proper ground ; but, as though he thought it enchanted, he hurries over it, touching upon only a few of the topics of discussion, and taking but very little notice of the arguments of his opponent as he passes along. It is a retreat instead of a regular engagement ; a running fight rather than a pitched battle. In favour of such a mode of conducting the controversy, it is possible he might choose to print in the form of a sermon.

But Mr. Kentish has *reasons* for not being more particular in his answer: " Of Mr. Fuller's remarks, many," says he, " are personal, and many refer solely to a vindication of the religious principles that he has seen proper to embrace.*" If many of my remarks be *personal*, Mr. Kentish had a right to point them out ; and ought to have done so rather than content himself with a general accusation unsubstantiated by a single proof. That I have vindicated those religious principles which I have thought proper to embrace, is true : the misrepresentation and contempt with which they have been treated by the Reviewers and other Socinian writers, rendered a vindication of them necessary ; and if our opponents have now retreated within the limits of their own territory, and are contented to act in future merely on their defensive, it may be presumed

* Page 3, Pref.

presumed without arrogance, that it has not been altogether without effect.

Mr. Kentish seems not only contented to act on the defensive, with respect to the moral tendency of his principles, but also with respect to the actual *moral effects* produced by them. He thinks, "in point of fact, it can scarcely be
 " proved, that in love to God they are *surpassed*
 " by their fellow-christians; though God for-
 " bid," he adds, "that we should rashly arro-
 " gate to ourselves *superiority of virtue!**" Rash, arrogant, and shocking however as this pretence appears to Mr. Kentish, it is no more than has been made by his brethren. All that Dr. Priestley has written upon the gloomy and immoral tendency of Calvinism implies a pretence to a superiority of virtue. What else is meant by his charging our views with being "unfavourable to
 " the love of both God and man; and an axe at
 " the root of all virtue?" He accuses us of
 " living in the dread of all free enquiry: where-
 " as they are in the way of growing wiser and
 " better as long as they live." He also goes about to weigh the virtue of Unitarians and Trinitarians; and though he allows the former to have most of an apparent conformity to the world, yet, "upon the whole, he supposes them
 " to approach nearest to the proper temper of
 " Christianity." Mr. Belsham also does not scruple to assert that "they—who are sincerely
 " pious

“ pious and diffusively benevolent *with* these
“ principles, could not have failed to have been
“ much *better*, and much happier, had they
“ adapted a milder, a more rational, a more
“ truly evangelical creed.” These are passages
which I have quoted, and answered in my *letters*
on Socinianism ; and what else can be made of them
but *a pretence to superiority of virtue* ? I do not
accuse these writers of rashness or arrogance in
making such pretences, unless it be on account
of their asserting what they are unable to main-
tain. It would be consistent with Christian hu-
mility to prove that true believers are men of
superior virtue to unbelievers ; and if any deno-
mination of professing Christians have an advan-
tage over others in this respect, they have a right,
especially when accused by them of immorality,
fairly and modestly to state it. But who can for-
bear to pity the situation of men, who, after all
these challenges, on the first close enquiry that is
made into the justice of their claims, are reduced
to the dire necessity of giving them up, of stand-
ing merely upon the defensive, and of exclaiming
against the *rashness of arrogating to themselves a su-
periority of virtue* !

It will be time enough for Mr. Kentish to
“ admit a claim to infallibility,” when such a
claim is made ; or to “ a knowlege of the mo-
“ tives or designs of men,” any farther than
as they are made manifest by their words and
actions, when his opponent makes any pretence

to it. In this way I suppose he himself will not scruple to judge the heart, since he proposes in the same page to "illustrate the *spirit* in which " my examination is written.*" I assure Mr. Kentish it was neither in an "unguarded" nor a "guarded" moment, that I presumed to charge Unitarians with having a heart secretly disaffected to the true character and government of God, and dissatisfied with the Gospel-way of salvation. Rather, was it not in an unguarded moment that he, as well as several of his brethren in the Reviewing department, accused me of so doing? If any of these writers thought proper to quote my words, why did they not quote the whole sentence as it stands? By their method of quotation one might prove from the Scriptures that *there is no God.*

The proposition as it stands in my Letters is *conditional*. It is true, the thing affirmed is, that "the avenues which lead to Socinianism are not " an openness to conviction, or a free and impartial inquiry after truth; but a heart secretly " disaffected to the true character and government of God, and dissatisfied with the Gospel " way of salvation:" but the *condition* on which the truth of this proposition is suspended, is, that Socinianism is a system the character of which is, that "irreligious men are the first, and serious " Christians the last to embrace it." Now do our opponents mean to admit without hesitation
or

* Page 4. Pref.

or explanation that this *is* the character of Socinianism? I know indeed they have conceded thus much; but I was ready to suppose that upon it's being represented to them in it's own colours, they would have recalled, or at least have endeavoured to put a more favourable construction upon their concessions. But it should seem by their applying the latter branch of the proposition to themselves, they admit the former as properly characteristic of their system: and if they admit the one, I see no cause to recede from the other.

I have contended that it is not presumption to judge of men's motives *by their words and actions*; and that it is what our opponents, as well as all other men, do in innumerable instances. In this instance, however, *I have not judged the motives of any individual*. The thing affirmed barely respects *the general course of things*. The avenues which lead to any place are the ordinary passages through which persons enter, but it does not follow that they are the only ones. Were I to assert that the avenues which lead to *offensive war* are not, as it's abettors would persuade us to think, a desire to maintain the honour of their country, but a heart secretly disaffected to the true interests of mankind, and dissatisfied with the morality of the Gospel; such an assertion, I fear, would contain but too much truth: it would not denote, however, that there never was an individual who engaged in such wars but from such motives. Persons may be drawn into them unawares, and con-

trary to their inclination; and being once engaged, may find it difficult to recede. Thus with respect to our religious sentiments; education, connexions, and various other things, may have great influence in determining them. How far such things may consist with sincere love to Christ I have not undertaken to decide. But as in the one case a person would generally find his heart averse from actual engagements, and leaning toward a peace, so I apprehend it will be in the other: like the *serious Christians* mentioned by Mrs. Barbauld, though they may rank with Socinians, yet their hearts will *lean* towards the doctrine that exalts the Saviour, and exhibits him as the atoning sacrifice.

Before Mr. Kentish enters on the defence of his principles on the ground of their moral tendency, he offers six previous remarks. These are as follow:

1. "An obvious effect of the impressions to which mankind are exposed from surrounding objects, is, that no principles can so fully influence the conduct as might be expected in theory.*" True, but the same remark equally requires to be made in favour of Calvinism, as of Socinianism. There is nothing in it therefore appropriate, or which goes to account for that want of practical religion which is acknowledged peculiarly to attend the professors of the latter.

2. "While

2. " While some men are confessedly much
 " better than their principles it will not, it can-
 " not be disputed that to the most valuable prin-
 " ciples others fail of doing justice.*" That
 some men's hearts are better than their systems is
 true; and for this reason, notwithstanding all that
 is said by my opponents to the contrary, I have
 not presumed to decide upon the state of indi-
 viduals.

It is also allowed, that " to the most valuable
 " principles others fail of doing justice." This
 is the same thing for substance as that which I
 have acknowledged in my introductory observa-
 tions; and I have therefore never reasoned either
 from the bad or good conduct of individuals, but
 from that of the *general body*. It is true I have
 mentioned the characters of some eminent persons
 amongst the Calvinists; but it was merely to con-
 front an assertion of Mr. Belsham, that " those
 " who were singularly pious and diffusively be-
 " nevolent *with* Calvinistic principles, could not
 " have failed to have been much better, and much
 " happier, if they had imbibed a different creed."

• The piety and benevolence of Hale, Franck,
 Brainerd, Edwards, Whitefield, Thornton, and
 Howard, were introduced as a proof that such
 degrees of virtue have been found amongst Cal-
 vinists as have never been exceeded by men of
 what are called rational principles, or indeed of
 any principles whatever.

3. " It

3. " It deserves to be considered farther, whether doctrines which have most efficacy upon the dispositions, the conduct, and the feelings of Christians, be not such as they profess in common.*" I have no objection to this or any other subject being considered, though I am persuaded the result of an impartial consideration in this case would be different from that which is suggested by Mr. Kentish: but granting his supposition to be true, the difficulty on his side is just where it was. If the principles which Calvinists and Socinians hold in common be the grand sources of virtue, why do they not influence both alike? Why is it that " rational Christians are spoken of as indifferent to practical religion;" and that those who acknowledge this charge, as Dr. Priestley and Mr. Belsham have done, are not able to vindicate them from it? If Calvinists and Socinians hold principles in common which are of a holy tendency, and yet the latter are the most indifferent to practical religion, there must be something unfavourable to virtue, one should think, in their peculiar sentiments.

4. " From a natural partiality moreover to opinions which themselves embrace, men will suppose those opinions to have a tendency peculiarly favourable to virtue and happiness. There is danger therefore lest the conclusion to which I have adverted be drawn rather by the feelings than by the understanding, rather by
" prejudice

“prejudice than by calm and unbiaſſed reaſon.*”
To this I anſwer, if the concluſions which I have drawn be unreaſonable, they are capable of being proved ſo.

5. “In their ideas too of moral excellence,
“different ſects of Chriſtians may not exactly
“agree.—Many of them ſeverely cenſure cer-
“tain inſtances of conformity to the world,
“which others of them may think not merely
“lawful, but deſerving of praiſe.†” True. Some
for example may live in the diſuſe of prayer;
and may plead in excuſe that this practice does
not accord with their ideas of devotion. They
may alſo frequent the gaming table, and the af-
ſembly room, and occaſionally, if not conſtantly,
reſort to the theatre, and may contend that each
is an innocent if not a praiſe-worthy amuſement.
But if people are not to be criminated beyond the
line marked out by their own opinions of mo-
rality, our “moderation” muſt extend farther
than Mr. Kentiſh himſelf might be willing to al-
low. There are people in the world who think fa-
vourably of polygamy, and others who would plead
for fornication, yea, for adultery itſelf, provided
it were kept a ſecret; yet it is to be hoped he
would not think the better of ſuch practices on
this account. On the contrary, he muſt think
himſelf warranted to conclude, in ordinary caſes
at leaſt, that the opinions of ſuch perſons were
formed under the influence of an immoral bias,
and

* Page 8.

† Ibid.

and therefore that they themselves partake of the nature of immorality.

6. " The very nature of the argument proposed, renders it extremely difficult to deduce from it a satisfactory inference. If to judge respecting the conduct of men, even in single cases, demand much care and knowlege, far more requisite are these qualifications when sentence is to be passed upon their general character. Who indeed is so intimately acquainted with the various denominations of Christians, as to form a decision upon this point that shall not be liable to the imputation of partiality, or of rashness?*" That care and knowlege are necessary in such a comparison I shall not dispute; and if I have betrayed my want of either, I presume it is capable of being exposed: but that the thing itself is impracticable I cannot admit. It is not impossible to discover who in general are serious, conscientious, and pious men, and who they are that indulge in dissipation and folly. The observation of Mr. Kentish, if it prove any thing, proves that the moral tendency of a doctrine is no proper criterion of it's truth. Yet he acknowledges that " In religion the maxim," ' ye shall know them by their fruits,' " is a maxim unquestionably of high authority, evident reason, and familiar application.†" How can these things consist together? If it be of " familiar application," it cannot be " extremely difficult,"
nor

* Page 8, 9.

† Page 5.

nor require any extraordinary degree of understanding to apply it. Let there be what difficulty there may however in this case, my work, so far as related to facts, was done ready to my hand. Dr. Priestley, Mr. Belsham, and Mrs. Barbauld, were my authorities for the want of regard to practical religion amongst rational Christians: writers whom Mr. Kentish will not accuse of the want of either "care or knowlege;" and to whom he will not in this cause impute either "partiality" or rashness."

It has been suggested by some who are friendly to the cause of Socinianism, though not professed Socinians, that I have made an unfair use of a few concessions; and that a similar use might be made of the concessions of many of the Puritans, who in their day lamented the imperfections and degeneracy of their own people. If Dr. Priestley and his brethren had barely acknowledged that there were great defects amongst their people when compared with the primitive Christians, or with what they ought to be, this I confess had been no more than what Puritan writers have done, and the writers of every other denomination of Christians might have done; and such acknowledgements ought not to have been improved against them. But who beside themselves have ever professed to hold a set of principles, to the discernment of which an indifference to religion in general was favourable; a system which those who were most indifferent to the *practice* of religion

ligion were the first, and serious Christians the last to embrace?—Who beside themselves have been reduced by facts which they could not deny, to such dire necessity?

From the foregoing introductory observations Mr. Kentish proceeds to the body of his discourse, which he divides into four heads of enquiry.

“ I. What is the tendency of the Unitarian doctrine with respect to the cultivation and exercise of the divine, the social, and the personal virtues? II. What assistance, support, and consolation it affords in the season of temptation, affliction, and death? III. What is its efficacy in the conversion of profligates and unbelievers? And IV. Finally, How far it is adapted to promote a veneration for the Scriptures, and to fortify our faith in Christianity?”

I. ON THE DIVINE, THE SOCIAL, AND THE PERSONAL VIRTUES.

Under the first of these particulars Mr. Kentish very properly considers “ love to God ;” and so far as he attempts an answer to what I have written, I suppose this is to be considered as an answer to my VIIth Letter. The substance of what he advances upon this subject is as follows.

“ We believe according to the sublime language of the favourite Apostle that *God is love* ; we consider all his moral excellencies, as justice, truth, and holiness, as modifications of this principle. Happiness we regard as the grand object of his works and dispensations, and conceive

“ ceive of his glory as resulting from the dif-
 “ fusion of this happiness.”

“ These being our ideas of the Deity, love
 “ to him cannot fail to be *shed abroad in our*
 “ *hearts*. Did we think of him indeed as one
 “ altogether like unto ourselves, did we imagine
 “ that he is vindictive, inexorable, arbitrary, and
 “ partial; and did we suppose his glory to be
 “ something distinct from the exercise of his
 “ goodness, we might experience difficulty in
 “ obedience to this first and greatest of the com-
 “ mandments. But in the contemplation of in-
 “ finite power employed to execute designs which
 “ proceed from infinite benevolence, and are
 “ planned by consummate wisdom, filial affection
 “ towards God is naturally enkindled and pre-
 “ served alive in our breasts.*”

On this statement I would observe in the first place, that it passes over one very important topic of discussion between us, namely, the doctrine of the atonement. Why is it that Mr. Kentish has passed over this doctrine? He knows that Socinian writers have charged it with implying *the natural implacability of God*; a charge against which I have attempted to defend it. Have I not a right to conclude from Mr. Kentish's silence on this head, that he feels the ground to be untenable?

Mr. Kentish has not only declined the discussion of one of the most important subjects, but those

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topics

topics which have fallen under his notice are stated with great *unfairness*. His account of my sentiments respecting the vindictive character of God is marked by the grossest misrepresentation. I had carefully explained the term *vindictive* when applied to the divine conduct in the punishment of sin, by observing, that "It is very common
 " for people, when they speak of vindictive punishment, to mean that kind of punishment
 " which is inflicted from a wrathful disposition,
 " or a disposition to punish for the pleasure of
 " punishing. Now if this be the meaning of our
 " opponents, we have no dispute with them.
 " We do not suppose the Almighty to punish sinners for the sake of putting them to pain. Vindictive punishment, as it is here defended, stands
 " opposed to that punishment which is merely
 " *corrective*. The one is exercised for the good
 " of the party ; the other not so, but for the good
 " of the community." (Letter VII.) Now though Mr. Kentish must have observed this statement, yet he has suffered himself to write as follows:—
 " Did we imagine that God is vindictive, inexorable, arbitrary, and partial; or did we suppose his glory to be something distinct from
 " the exercise of his goodness, we might experience difficulty in obedience to this first and
 " greatest of the commandments.*" As a proof, it should seem, that these were my sentiments, Mr. Kentish refers to page 119, of the second edition
 of

* Page 11, 12,

of my Letters, where I have acknowledged that there is a mixture of *the vindictive* in the Calvinistic system. But have I not also in the same page so explained my meaning as to reject those offensive ideas which Mr. Kentish has introduced in connexion with it? Why did he hold up my acknowledgement concerning the vindictive character of God, without at the same time holding up that sense of it in which I professed to defend it? Or if he might think himself excused from this, why did he connect such terms with it as must exhibit it in a different and contrary sense, even that very sense in which I had opposed it? I cannot but consider this as disingenuous; and as greatly resembling the conduct of certain Deists, who in their attacks upon Christianity, choose first to dress it up in the habits of Popery.

As to the glory of God consisting in the exercise of his goodness, if it be meant of the *manifestation* of the divine glory, and goodness be put for *moral excellence*, it is the same thing as that which I have acknowledged, viz. that "the glory of God *consists* in doing that which shall be best upon the whole:" but by goodness Mr. Kentish means merely beneficence, undistinguishing beneficence, or the pursuit of ultimate happiness in behalf of every intelligent being in the creation, obedient or rebellious, penitent or impenitent, men or devils. In this sense I allow that the glory of God may be at variance with the happiness of creatures, and I contend that
where

where it is so, the latter and not the former ought to be given up.

Mr. Kentish pleads from "the declaration of the favourite Apostle, *God is love*," and supposes that "all his moral excellencies, as justice, truth, and holiness, are but modifications of this principle." To all this I have no objection, provided the object aimed at be the general good of the moral system. But Mr. Kentish supposes if God be love, that in all he does he must have the good of every individual in his dominions in view. On this principle he must have destroyed Sodom and Gomorrha, Cain, and Balaam, and Saul, and Judas, and all those who in every age have lived *foaming out their own shame*, and to whom, according to the scriptures, *is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever*, together with Satan and all his rebellious legions, not only as examples to the intelligent creation, but *for their own good*! Surely this is not a necessary inference from the apostolic declaration. There are other cases as well as this in which justice may be a modification of love; but in no case does it require that an incorrigible offender should not be punished but for his own advantage. The execution of a murderer may be an exercise of pure benevolence to the community, though of just displeasure to the criminal. The removal of a restless, ambitious, intriguing, and bloody-minded prince or princess from the earth, may be a mercy to mankind, and as such may be considered

sidered as an act worthy of *the God of love*; but it may not follow that this is accomplished in love to *the systematic murderer of the human race*. If all the West India Islands were to be overwhelmed in some dire destruction, I am not sure that it would not be a mercy to the human species; it would terminate the miseries of thousands, and prevent the annual sacrifice of thousands more; and yet such an event might proceed not from love, but from just displeasure to guilty individuals. It does not follow therefore from any principles with which we are acquainted, that because *God is love*, he must have the happiness of his incorrigible enemies in view in all the displeasure which he pours upon them.

In order, it should seem, to obviate this reasoning, Mr. Kentish objects to our "thinking
" and speaking respecting the measures of the
" divine administration, as though they were
" precisely similar to the measures which are pursued by earthly rulers.*" It is curious to observe in what manner our opponents shift their positions, and veer about as occasion requires. Dr. Priestley accused the Calvinistic system of representing God in such a light, "that no earthly
" parent could imitate him without sustaining a
" character shocking to mankind." To this I answered, by proving, that it is the practice of every good government to make examples of incorrigible offenders; and that benevolence itself
requires

* Page 20.

requires it: yea, that there have been cases in which even a *parent* has been obliged, in benevolence to his family, and from a concern for the general good, to give up a stubborn and rebellious son to be stoned to death by the elders of his city, and that not for his own good, but *that all Israel might bear and fear*. To this Mr. Kentish replies, that God's government is not to be measured by human governments. First, then we are accused of exhibiting the divine character in such a light, that it cannot be imitated; and when we prove that it can and ought, in those respects, to be imitated, then we are charged with thinking and speaking of God "as one altogether like ourselves."

But passing this, the point at issue is, which of the above representations of the divine character tends most to excite our *love* to him. Mr. Kentish conceives, that as love to God arises from a contemplation of his goodness, his scheme must, in this instance, have the advantage. That depraved creatures, who care not for the honour of the divine government, but whose supreme regard is directed towards themselves, should love that Being best, who, whatever be their character and conduct, is most devoted to their happiness, is readily admitted. But this is not the love of God. That goodness is the immediate object of love, I also admit; but goodness in the divine Being is the same thing as moral excellence, and this renders him an object of love only to such
created

created beings as in some degree bear his image. The goodness for which Mr. Kentish pleads, is mere undistinguishing beneficence, of which we can form no idea without feeling at the same time a diminution of *respect*. If a supreme magistrate should possess such an attachment to his subjects, as that, whatever were their crimes, he could in no case be induced to give any one of them up to condign punishment, or to any other punishment than what should be adapted to promote his good, he would presently become an object of general *contempt*. Or if a father should possess such a fondness for his children, that let any one of them be guilty of what he might, suppose it were murder, a hundred times repeated, yet he could never consent that any punishment should be inflicted upon him, excepting such as might be productive of his good, such a father would be detested by the community, and *despised* by his own family.

But perhaps I may be told that the divine government is not to be measured by human governments, no not by those which are *parental*. Be it so; indeed I am willing to grant Mr. Kentish that it is not. If he can prove from *Scripture* that the divine government is possessed of this peculiarity, that in every instance of justice the good of the party, as well as the good of the community, is the object pursued, I will readily admit it, and will never mention it's inconsistency with our ideas of government any more. But while

no manner of appeal is made to the Scriptures; while the numerous passages which I have alleged in favour of the doctrine of vindictive punishment remain unnoticed; while nothing of any account, except the nature and fitness of things, is alleged, I have a right to shew that *from the nature and fitness of things* no conclusion like that of Mr. Kentish can be drawn, but the very reverse. Love to a government, even a parental one, must be accompanied with *respect*. A being whose kindness degenerates into fondness, however his conduct may please our selfish humours, can never be the object of our *esteem*. On this principle, when Jehovah proclaimed his name, or character, to Moses, he not only declared himself to be *the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and in truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin*; but added, AND THAT WILL BY NO MEANS CLEAR THE GUILTY.

“ Love to God,” Mr. Kentish observes, “ is no
 “ enthusiastic rapture, no offspring of a licentious
 “ imagination. It consists in the highest esteem
 “ for the divine character, and the liveliest gra-
 “ titude for the divine mercies.*” Very true :
 It is the *character* of God that is the prime object
 of genuine love; and I may add what I have ob-
 served before, that ‘ the true character of God as
 ‘ revealed in the Scriptures must be taken into the
 ‘ account in determining whether our love to God
 ‘ be

* Page 10.

‘ be genuine or not. We may clothe the divine
‘ Being with such attributes, and such only, as will
‘ suit our depraved taste; and then it will be no
‘ difficult thing to fall down and worship him: but
‘ this is not the love of God; but of an idol of our
‘ own creating.’ It appears to me that the God in
whom Mr. Kentish professes to believe is not the
true God, or the God revealed in the Bible; and
that the love he pleads for is no other than self-
love, or an attachment to a Being whose glory
consists in his being invariably attached to us.

The character of God is principally manifested
to us through those two grand mediums, the law
and the gospel: but neither of them convey any
such idea of him as that which Mr. Kentish en-
deavours to exhibit. By the precepts and penal-
ties of the former Jehovah declared his love to
men as creatures, by guarding them against every
approach to evil; but he also by the same means
solemnly declared his love of righteousness, and
his determination to maintain a righteous govern-
ment in the universe. By the *propitiation* ex-
hibited in the latter the same important ideas are
repeated, and others of still greater importance
to us revealed. Here Jehovah declares his com-
passion to men as guilty and miserable; but it is
without any relaxation of the rigid uprightness of
his moral government, or the least implication
that his rebellious creatures had been hardly dealt
with, that he pours forth a rich exuberance of
mercy upon the unworthy. He is still the *Just*

God, and the Saviour; Just, and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. While salvation is promised to every believing sinner, damnation is threatened to every one that believeth not.

There is a rectitude that runs through all the dispensations of God, which determines his true character, and by consequence the nature of genuine love to him, seeing the one must necessarily correspond with the other. The Scripture character of God is such, that wicked men are naturally averse to it. *The carnal mind is enmity against God.* Our Lord told the Jews notwithstanding all their boasted attachment to God, that they *had not the love of God in them.* Hence we are taught the necessity of the *heart being circumcised to love the Lord our God.** But the character of God as drawn by Mr. Kentish is such that the most depraved being must approve it, and that without any change in the unholy bias of his heart. *Sinners can love those that love them.* A Being, the perfections of whose nature require him to promote the good of creation in general, will be loved by those, and those only, who value the general good, and who no otherwise desire the happiness of any creature, not even their own, than as it is included in the well-being of his moral empire. But a Being, the properties of whose nature prevent him in any instance from making a final example of any of his rebellious creatures, or punishing them in any way except that

* Rem. viii. 7. John v. 42. Deut. xxx. 6.

that in which their good shall be his ultimate end, may be beloved by those who have no regard for the general good, nor for any part of intelligent existence but themselves, or such as become subservient to themselves. And what other than this is Mr. Kentish's representation of love to God? Considering God as all goodness, and goodness as consisting in a determination to do good ultimately to every creature, let his character and conduct be what it may, he supposes it to be *natural* to men to love him. "The love of God," he says, "cannot fail to be *shed abroad in our hearts*:" it is "naturally enkindled and kept alive in our breasts.*" Genuine love to God requires to be *shed abroad in the heart* BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, but there needs no Holy Spirit in this case; it is altogether *natural* to man; Mr. Kentish therefore acted very properly in leaving that part of the passage out of his quotation.

The scheme of our opponents not only misrepresents the *nature* of love to God, but is miserably deficient with respect to *motives* whereby it may be excited. *God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.—Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins.—God commendeth his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.—He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for*

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* Page 11, 12.

*us all. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.** Such is the language of inspiration: but this affecting epitome of gospel-truth is despoiled of all its glory by the expositions of our opponents. Every thing rich, interesting, and endearing, which it contains, evaporates in their hands, as by a kind of chymical process, and nothing is left behind that can acquit the sacred writers of dealing in great swelling words of vanity.

Mr. Kentish's remark upon this subject, together with a quotation from Dr. Kippis in support of it, are feeble and nugatory: they prove nothing but the poverty of the cause. "By the
 " goodness of the Almighty exhibited in the
 " works of nature, in the dispensations of Providence, and in our temporal comfort, we are
 " as much impressed, I presume, (says Mr. Kentish) as any class of Christians. And if we
 " neither think nor speak like some of them,
 " concerning the divine love manifested in the
 " gift of Jesus Christ, it must not hence be inferred that we are less attentive to its magnitude and extent. It is our persuasion on the
 " contrary, that from the views we cherish of this
 " important subject we can say with peculiar
 " justice, *we love him because he first loved us.*†" To the "persuasion" of Mr. Kentish is added the *opinion* of Dr. Kippis, that when "writers express

* John iii. 16. 1 John iv. 13. Rom. v. 8.—viii. 32.
 2 Cor. ix. 15. † Page 12, 13.

“ press themselves as if the Christian revelation
“ would be of little value, unless their particular
“ systems are adopted, it is a kind of language
“ which is extremely injudicious, and which
“ ought to be avoided and discouraged—and that
“ no man can think meanly of the evangelical
“ dispensation, or detract from it's excellence and
“ dignity who believes that God is the author of
“ it, that it was communicated by Jesus Christ,
“ and that he conveys to us knowledge, pardon,
“ holiness, and eternal life.*” Our opponents,
then, in all their numerous charges of *idolatry*,
corrupting Christianity, &c. exhibited against us,
wish to be understood, it seems, after all, as in-
cluding nothing under these offensive terms which
implies “ a mean opinion of the evangelical dis-
“ pensation, or which detracts from it's excellence
“ and dignity!” I wish it were in my power ho-
nestly to return the compliment. In this case,
however, I should think consistency would re-
quire me to retract my former charges. But were
Calvinists and Socinians to coalesce upon Dr.
Kippis's principles, I should fear it would deserve
the name of a *confederacy* against the Holy Scrip-
tures. The Apostle Paul must necessarily fall under
their united censure: for if it be “ extremely in-
“ judicious to represent the Christian Revelation
“ as of little value, unless a particular system be
“ adopted,” he must have been verily guilty in
suggesting that the Galatian teachers, who only
erred

* Page 12, 13. note.

erred on the doctrine of justification, had introduced *another gospel*, and aimed at *perverting the gospel of Christ*. But if the scheme of Mr. Kentish be defective in one point of view, he seems to think it has the advantage in another.

The *Unity of God*, he observes, stands connected with the command to love him, and labours from hence to prove the superior efficacy of his sentiments in *promoting* this temper of mind, inasmuch as they who imbibe them are not subject to be distracted and bewildered in their worship as those are who worship a plurality of deities.* But with this reasoning I, who do not worship a plurality of deities, have no concern.

Under the article of *love to God*, Mr. Kentish proceeds to discourse on *love to Christ*.† With what “propriety” this is done, unless he be possessed of deity, I shall not inquire. It is in this place, I suppose, that we are to consider him as answering my eleventh Letter, which was written on this subject. The questions discussed in that Letter were, “Which of the two systems tends most to exalt the character of Christ; which places his mediation in the most important view; and which represents us as most indebted to his undertaking?” The substance of Mr. Kentish’s remarks on the first of these questions consists in this, that it is not *greatness*, but *goodness*, that is the object of love; that “love to Christ has its just foundation, not in a persuasion

* Page 14, 15. † Page 15—19.

“ suasion of his superior dignity, but in a conviction that his character was distinguished by the “ beauty of holiness,” or the charms of “ virtue.*” I allow that goodness, and not greatness, is the immediate object of love; but Mr. Kentish will also allow, that the latter renders a being *capable* of the former. The more enlargedness of mind any person possesses, the more capable he is of goodness; and if his moral qualities keep pace with his natural accomplishments, he is a more estimable character than if his mind were not enlarged.

The greater any character is therefore, if his goodness be but equal to his greatness, the more he becomes the proper object of love. Will Mr. Kentish pretend that the “ charms of virtue” in a good man, in Jesus Christ for example, supposing him to be only a good man, ought to render him as much the object of our affection as the infinitely glorious moral excellence of the divine Being ought to render him? But by how much the character of the Divine Being is more estimable than that of the best of men, by so much is the character of Christ more estimable upon the supposition of his proper Deity than upon that of his being merely human.

Mr. Kentish, as though he felt this difficulty and wished to remove it, suggests that it is upon the principle of *gratitude* that we “ give to God “ the supreme author of our enjoyments, our

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“ highest

“ highest, purest love.*” But is it gratitude *only* that binds us to love God better than a creature? Is it merely because we receive more from him? Is it not also on account of the infinite amiableness of his moral character as displayed particularly in the Gospel; or, as the Scriptures express it, of *the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*? Yea, is it not *primarily* on this account that God is entitled to our “ highest and purest love?”

Mr. Kentish has not thought it proper to enter on the enquiries, “ Which of the two systems “ places the mediation of Christ in the most important light; and which represents us as most “ indebted to his undertaking?” He has made some observations however upon *gratitude*. Having stated that God is to be loved on this principle with our highest, purest love, he adds, “ Hence too we cannot avoid indulging and “ shewing affection for those of our fellow-creatures whom he disposes and enables to do us “ good; and who in truth are but the instruments “ of his bounty. It is upon the same principle “ that we perceive the justice of manifesting no “ common love to Christ, the author under God “ of our most valuable privileges and our richest “ blessings.†” Whether the love of our opponents towards Christ in a way of gratitude be common or uncommon, while they maintain that he existed not till he was born of Mary, they cannot consider themselves as under any obligation to

to him for *coming into the world to save them*, seeing that was a matter in which he must have been totally *involuntary*: and while they reject the doctrine of the *atonement*, I do not see how they can feel obliged to *him* for the forgiveness of their sins; or to any thing which he has done, or suffered, for their hopes of eternal life. They may feel indebted to him for having *published* these doctrines; but if this be all, it is a small affair for so much to be made of it. Many a prophet who was a bearer of heavy tidings, would have been glad in this respect to exchange messages with him. Dr. Toulmin, in a former publication, has tried to magnify this subject a little, by alleging that "Christ came not only to *preach* " the doctrine of a future state, but to *prove* it—" and to furnish a *pledge* of the resurrection to " eternal life by his own resurrection.*" Dr. Toulmin has not informed us in what manner the mission of Christ proved the doctrine of a future state, any otherwise than as his resurrection afforded a pledge of it; and this can add nothing as a foundation of gratitude to him, inasmuch as, upon his principles, it was a matter in which he had no *voluntary* concern.

For our parts, we consider ourselves as deeply indebted to Christ for his voluntary assumption of our nature; for the preference given to us before the fallen Angels; for his condescending to

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become

* *Dissertation on the internal Evidencies and Excellency of Christianity.* App. I. p. 215.

become subject to temptations and afflictions for our sake, *that in all things he might be made like unto his brethren*; and for his offering himself without spot to God as our atoning sacrifice, thereby *obtaining* the remission of our sins, and becoming the *foundation* of our hopes of eternal life: but none of these things have any place in the system of our opponents. And though they would persuade us that they hold the sentiments embraced by primitive Christians, yet they cannot follow them in these important particulars. Their views of things will not suffer them to speak of his *taking upon him flesh and blood*; of his *taking upon him not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham*; of his *being in the form of God*, and yet *taking upon him the form of a servant*; and *being made in the likeness of men*; of our being *forgiven for his sake*; or of the *promise of an eternal inheritance being received by means of his death*.* According to their principles, his coming into the world was no act of his own; he had no existence prior to his existing in *flesh and blood*; it was not a matter of choice with him whether he would be made an angel or a man; he never existed in any other form, nor sustained any other character, than that of *a servant*; his death had no influence on the forgiveness of our sins, or in procuring eternal life: none of these things therefore afford to them any foundation for gratitude.

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* Heb. ii. 14, 16. Phil. ii. 6, 7. Eph. iv. 32. Heb. ix. 15.

The substance of this argument was stated in my fourteenth letter ; but neither of my opponents has thought proper to take any notice of it. It might be their wisdom to decline this part of the subject which is so strongly supported by the express declarations of Scripture.

Mr. Kentish seems to feel, that love to Christ makes but a diminutive figure in the Socinian scheme ; and therefore apologizes for it. To suppose Christ to have been possessed of " a super-human nature, and so to regard him," he says, " would be infringing upon our pious gratitude to the adorable Being whom we are commanded to love with an entire affection." To this I reply, our belief of a doctrine which our opponents will not allow us to believe, namely, the divine Unity, enables us to repel this objection : we believe, and that on the first of all authority, that *Christ and the Father are so one, that he who hath seen him hath seen the Father ; and that he who honoureth him, in so doing, honoureth the Father.** The idea thrown out by Mr. Kentish, and which enters into the essence of his system, is what the Scriptures are utterly unacquainted with. They require us to love creatures in different degrees. But inasmuch as this love, if carried to excess, would dishonour the divine Being, these requirements are accompanied and limited by various cautions. Thus we are required to love all mankind as our fellow-creatures ;

* John x. 30.—xiv. 9, 11.—v. 23.

tures; but we must take heed of improper attachments, lest we *worship the creature more than the Creator*. We are commanded to love and honour our parents; but if they stand in competition with Christ, we are required comparatively to *hate* them. Christians are enjoined to love their ministers, who are over them in the Lord; but, if even the servants of Christ be idolized, it shall be demanded on their behalf, *Who then is Paul, or who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?* We are, doubtless, obliged to love angels, because they are our *brethren*, and are employed as *ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation*; but if any attempt to worship them, they will profess themselves to be what they are, and direct to the worshipping of God.* Now, if Christ be only a creature, it might have been expected, that the numerous commands to love and honour him, should also have been accompanied with some such cautions, lest in complying with them, we should “infringe” upon the honour due to the Father. The great honour to which Christ was exalted above all other creatures, rendered such cautions peculiarly necessary, since love to him would be in the greater danger of being carried to excess: and it is a fact, that the great body of those whom our opponents will allow to have been serious Christians, in almost all ages, have actually worshipped him as God.

Yet

* Rev. xxii. 9.

Yet there is not a single caution against this sort of excess in all the New Testament; nor the least intimation, that in giving glory to the Son, we may possibly "infringe" upon the glory of the Father. On the contrary, when the topic of love to Christ occurs, every thing is said to inflame it, and nothing to damp it. There is a becoming jealousy in the divine Being expressed in other cases, but never in this: if any thing of this kind be expressed, it is on the other side. *If a man love me—my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. If any man serve me, him will my Father honour. The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son: that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father who hath sent him.**

Mr. Kentish, as if he felt no pleasure in discoursing upon the character and work of Christ, as the grounds of love to him, proceeds to remark with some apparent satisfaction upon certain expressions of it. "From the lips of our "divine Instructor himself," he says, "let us learn—the lesson of love to him; let us hence be informed in what this principle consists. "If a man love me," says Jesus, "he will keep my words—he that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings—ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you—these things I command you, that ye
"love

* John xiv. 23.—xii. 26.—v. 22, 23.

“*love one another.* Who can here refrain from
 “observing how truly rational is this language,
 “how remote from mystery and enthusiasm? But
 “while Christ declares, that such as obey his
 “laws, as imbibe his spirit, manifest love to him,
 “let none of his followers be so ignorant and
 “presumptuous as to insist upon other testimo-
 “nies of affection to their master. Of better
 “they cannot possibly conceive, upon stronger
 “they cannot possibly rely. *”

I have no dispute with Mr. Kentish concerning what are the proper expressions of love to Christ; but his insinuating that to plead for his deity and atonement as grounds of love to him, is to “in-
 “sist upon other testimonies of affection towards
 “him,” testimonies which are “mysterious and
 “enthusiastic,” is calculated to perplex the subject. To say nothing of the “decency” of his pronouncing upon our conduct in this instance as “ignorant and presumptuous,” it is but too manifest that he wishes to confound the *reasons* of love with the *expressions* of it; and under a shew of regard for the one, to draw off the reader’s attention from the other. Mr. Kentish may recollect, that the same language is used of love to God, as of love to Christ: *This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous.*† Now an enemy to the infinitely amiable moral character of the Deity, as the primary ground of love to him, might
 here

* Page 18, 19.

† 1 John v. 3.

here exclaim with Mr. Kentish. ' Let us
' hence be informed in what the principle of
' love to God consists : it is to *keep his command-*
' *ments*. Who can here refrain from observing
' how truly rational is this language, how remote
' from mystery and enthusiasm? But while God
' declares that such as keep his commandments,
' manifest love to him, let none be so ignorant
' and presumptuous as to insist on other testimo-
' nies of affection to him——Let them not talk
' of "*contemplating* infinite power employed to
' execute designs which proceed from infinite be-
' nevolence, and of filial affection towards God
' as enkindled by such contemplations.*" Mr.
Kentish would probably reply to this effect, the
grounds or *reasons* of love to God are one thing,
and the appointed *expressions* of it another: and
your depreciating the former under a pretence of
exalting the latter, is as if you were to kill the
root, in order to preserve the fruit. Such is my
reply to Mr. Kentish.

From the love of God and Christ, Mr. Kentish
proceeds to discourse on *the fear of God*.† I do
not recollect having advanced any thing in my
letters on this subject. I may observe, however,
that the definition given of this virtue does not
appear to me to answer to the scriptural account
of it. It is said to be "the veneration of in-
" finite grandeur." But this approaches nearer
to a definition of admiration than of fear. The

N

moral

* Page 12.

† Page 19.

moral excellence of the Deity, as the object of fear, enters not into it; neither is there any thing of a moral nature included in it. Without taking upon me to define this heavenly virtue, I may observe, that a holy dread of offending God, or of incurring his displeasure, enters into its essence. The main objection that I feel to the scheme of my opponent on this head is, that the divine *goodness*, according to his notion of it, necessarily pursues the ultimate happiness of all creatures, pure or impure, penitent, or impenitent, men or devils. This, as I have already stated, undermines that *respect* to the divine character which is the foundation of both love and fear.

That God is the Father of all his creatures, is true;* but it is also true that he is a Father to those that believe in his Son, in such a sense as he is not to the rest of the world. The Jews boasted that God was their Father: but Jesus answered, *If God were your Father, ye would love me.—To as many as received Christ, and no more, was power given to become the sons of God, even to them who believed on his name.* This adoption by Jesus Christ is not the common heritage of men: it is a subject of special promise. *Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.†* And it ought to be observed, that it is this evangelical relation
and

* Page 20. † John viii. 42—i. 12.—2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.

and not that of creatures to their Creator that converts our "afflictions into fatherly corrections." There have been characters in the world, of whom it has been said, *He that made them will not have mercy on them; and he that formed them will shew them no favour.* These things ought not to be confounded.

After considering the fear of God, our author proceeds to discourse on *confidence in him*.^{*} In this, as in most other of his discussions, Mr. Kentish appears to me to forget that he is a sinner; representing the divine Being, and his creature man, as upon terms of the most perfect amity. His persuasion of the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Deity begets confidence. But nothing is said of his going to God, under a sense of his helpless and perishing condition as a sinner, and under the warrant of the Gospel invitations; or of his confiding in him for eternal salvation. The confidence which Mr. Kentish describes is more suitable to the condition of holy angels, than of guilty creatures who have incurred the just displeasure of their Maker.

There is one subject included in the Scripture exercises of devotion, which Mr. Kentish has passed over, namely, *trusting in Christ*. Under the article of love to God, he considered love to Christ: and trusting in Christ is no less an exercise of Christian devotion than love to him; an exercise too with which our eternal salvation

stands connected. *In his name shall the Gentiles trust.—That ye should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation.—I know whom I have trusted, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.** In my second letter I observed, that upon the principles of our opponents, “all trust or confidence in “Christ for salvation is utterly excluded.” And how has Mr. Kentish answered to this charge? By passing it over in silence. This is a serious matter. O that, for their own sakes, they could be convinced of the insufficiency of the ground on which they rest their hopes, and build upon the foundation that God hath laid in Zion! Uncharitable and uncandid as they consider me, I could water these pages with tears for them. My heart’s desire and prayer to God is, that they may be saved. But *other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

From reasoning, Mr. Kentish proceeds to *facts*. He calls upon us “to shew, that as a body, they “are less actuated than others, by the spirit of “genuine devotion,†” Mr. Kentish must be sensible that private devotion is a matter that cannot come under public cognizance. In my VIIth letter, therefore, which was written upon this part of the subject, I did not refer to facts, but contented myself with reasoning on the tendency

* Rom. xv. 12. Eph. i. 12, 13. 2 Tim. i. 12. † Page 22.

dency of principles. It is a circumstance not the most favourable, however, to the devotion of Socinians, that persons, when they embrace their system, though they have previously been in the habit of praying to God, yet are frequently known, at that time, entirely to give it up; or, if they practise it, it is by drawing up a written composition, and reading it to the Almighty. Such, I suppose, was Mrs. Barbauld's *Address to the Deity*, to which Mr. Kentish referred.* Though I have not seen it, I doubt not that it was an elegant composition; but whether there was any *devotion* in it is another question. Sure I am, that such things are at a great remove from those prayers and supplications which abounded amongst the primitive Christians, and which have abounded amongst serious Christians of every age. Mr. Kentish should consider too, that the principal part of what I have alleged to the disadvantage of Socinian piety, is taken from the acknowledgments of their own writers. He calls upon his "Fellow Christians to shew, that as a body, they are less actuated than others, by the spirit of genuine devotion;" and from his Fellow Christians, even in the strictest sense of the term, let him receive an answer. Dr. Priestley confesses that so it *seems* to be; and Mrs. Barbauld, by manifest consequence, informs us that *so it is*. "Calvinists," says the former, "*seem* to have more of a real principle of religion than

* Page 25. note.

“than Unitarians.” “There is still apparent
 “in that class called *serious Christians*,” says the
 latter, “a tenderness in exposing these doctrines,
 “a sort of leaning towards them, as in walking
 “over a precipice one would lean to the safest
 “side.” What is this but acknowledging that
complete Socinians are not distinguished by their se-
riousness?

Mr. Kentish next refers to *a number of characters*
 of his own denomination who have been eminent
 for their piety.* Whether this account be liable
 to animadversion, I have no inclination to in-
 quire. To animadvert on the characters of indi-
 viduals, especially on those of the dead, is in-
 vidious; and it forms no part of my plan: on the
 contrary, as I have said before, I have professedly
 declined it. Let our opponents make the most
 of their piety; let them muster up all their force;
 let them claim those as Unitarians when dead,
 whom they refused to acknowledge as such while
 they were living;† I have no apprehensions as to
 the issue of the contest.

Our opponents, however, must not always be
 indulged in their pretensions. We cannot allow
 them, for example, to substitute *words* in the place
 of *actions*. If one on their side the question make
 a speech, or print a sermon, or a set of sermons
 in

* Page 23. 25.

† Dr. Priestley refused to acknowledge Dr. Price as a
 Unitarian, when they were engaged in controversy, though
 both my opponents now place him in their list.

in favour of morality, they seem to wish to consider it amongst the evidences of the moral tendency of their principles. It is not Dr. Priestley's writing *on the duty of not living to ourselves*; nor Mr. Turner's publishing a volume of sermons on moral subjects, though applauded by Reviewers, principally, if not entirely, of his own persuasion, that will afford a "practical answer" to my letters, on Socinianism.*

From the divine, Mr. Kentish proceeds to discourse on the *social* and *personal* virtues.† I perceive many things in this part of his performance which would admit of a reply; but nothing that requires any, except what he alleges on *the innocence of error*. "Liberality," Mr. Kentish observes, "inclines us to believe, that involuntary religious error exposes not man to the displeasure of their Maker."—And again, "We assert the innocence of involuntary error. It is the unhappiness of many professors of our religion to consider it as partaking of the nature of sin. Such is the language they use in their writings.‡" Surely Mr. Kentish has not read what he has written against, or he must have noticed that I also have acknowledged the innocence of *involuntary* error. Have I not said, 'the mere holding of an opinion, considered abstractedly from the motive, or state of mind of him that holds it, must be simply an exercise of intellect

* See "*Wood's Sermon*," for Turner of Wakefield, p. 50, 51. note. † Page 25. ‡ Page 29, 30.

‘tellect; and I am inclined to think has in it neither good nor evil.*’ Does not Mr. Kentish know that the ground on which I have supposed error relating to the gospel be sinful, is, that it is *not involuntary*? Not that I accuse those who err of *knowing that they do so*; or of *avowing principles which in their conscience they do not believe*: this would not be error, but gross dishonesty. Voluntary error is *that which arises from an evil bias of heart*, or a dislike to the truth. Such is the account given of certain characters by a sacred writer: *Because they received not the love of the truth—God sent them strong delusions that they should believe a lie.*† These men were not apprized of their being in an error; they believed their lie: but this belief arose from a dislike of truth; and it was this that denominated it voluntary, and sinful.

What is it that Mr. Kentish would persuade his Readers that I believe? “The mere conclusions of the understanding,” he says, “where the will is unconcerned, cannot surely participate of guilt:” and who thinks they can? “Guilt,” he adds, “then only attaches itself to error, when men wilfully and indolently refuse to employ the means of better information which are put into their hands.‡” Very well, and who imagines the contrary?

From these principles, which Mr. Kentish seems willing to have considered as the exclusive property

* Letter X. p. 176. † 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11. ‡ Page 31.

property of himself and his brethren, he proceeds to draw certain useful improvements: "By these considerations, my Fellow Christians," he says, "we are restrained from placing ourselves in the chair of infallibility, from rashly judging upon the present state, and the future doom of our virtuous, though it may be, mistaken brethren." Part of this is no doubt very good; it is highly proper that fallible creatures should make no pretence to infallibility: but how can Mr. Kentish say that they do not judge upon the present state of others, when in the same sentence he pronounces some men "virtuous," and calls them "brethren?" Will he give the name of "virtuous" to every man in the world? If not, he occupies the seat of judgment as really as I do: his censure therefore does not affect my judging upon "the present state of men," for he does the same, and that in the same breath; but my not acknowledging those as "virtuous, Christian brethren," whom he accounts so.

But, say our opponents, it is illiberal and presumptuous in you to attribute men's errors on divine subjects to an evil bias of heart. *If they were not attributed to this cause in the Scriptures, I grant it would be so:* but it is neither illiberal nor presumptuous to view things as they are there represented. I have no more inclination than Mr. Kentish to occupy the "chair of infallibility:" but I consider it as a part of my proper work, and that of every other Christian, to

judge of the meaning of his decisions who does occupy it. Produce me an example from the New Testament of a single character who imbibed and taught false doctrine, and who was treated by the Apostles as innocent. How different from this is the conduct of Paul, and Peter, and John, and Jude.* Nay, produce me a single example of error in matters of religion amongst good men, that is treated as innocent in the Holy Scriptures. Are not the tenets of some amongst the Corinthians, who denied the resurrection, called *evil communications which would corrupt good manners?* Were not the errors of the Galatians called *disobedience* to the truth; and were they not reproached on this account as *foolish*, and in a sort *bewitched*, and as needing to have Christ, *again formed in them?* Did not our Lord accuse his own disciples, whose minds were blinded by their notions of an earthly kingdom, with *folly and slowness of heart?*†

In things purely *natural*, men may think justly, or make mistakes without any degree of goodness on the one side, or evil on the other: and even in things of a moral nature, if our errors arose either from natural incapacity, or the want of sufficient means of information, they would be excusable: but never, that I recollect, do the Scriptures represent errors of the latter description,

* Gal. i. 7, 8. 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11. 2 Pet. ii. 1. 1 John iv. 6. Jude 4.

† 1 Cor. xv. 33, 34. Gal. iii. 1.—iv. 19. Luke xxiv. 25.

tion, especially those which relate to the gospel way of salvation, as arising from these causes. They teach us, that *way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein*; intimating that the errors which men make concerning the way of salvation, do not arise from the want of natural capacity, but of a *way-faring spirit*, or a true desire to walk in it.

I am not conscious of retaining any error: yet there is little doubt but that I do: from having discovered many in my past life, I have reason to suspect that there are many more about me undiscovered. But whatever they be, I suppose they are owing to some sinful prejudice of which I am not aware: and I know not that I am obliged to think differently of the errors of other people.

I perceive Mr. Kentish himself can admit the morality of opinion, where himself or a fellow-creature is the object of it. He pleads for liberality of sentiment, (by which he seems to intend an equally good opinion of men notwithstanding their errors) as a *virtue*, a virtue in which he thinks his brethren to excel. He must therefore consider its opposite as a *vice*, a vice which operates to our disadvantage. Now, I would ask Mr. Kentish as before, I asked Mr. Lindsey,

“ Supposing that I am in an error in thinking
“ amiss of my fellow-creatures, why should it
“ not be as innocent as thinking amiss of Christ?
“ Why ought I to be reproached as an illibe-

“ral, uncharitable bigot for the one, while no
 “one ought to think the worse of me for the
 “other?” I wish some one of our opponents
 would answer this question.

If “the language of *liberality* be” what Mr. Kentish says it is, “that, *in every nation, he that*
 “*feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is ac-*
 “*cepted,*” we can assure him that we are not such
 strangers to it as he may be apt to imagine. Such
 language not only approves itself to our judg-
 ments, but rejoices our hearts. And if *bigotry*
 be, as he defines it, “such an inordinate attach-
 “ment to our own modes of faith and worship,
 “as prompts us to *have no dealings* with those
 “who prefer others, to think of them with un-
 “kindness, and to act towards them with vio-
 “lence,” provided he do not extend his *dealings*
 to Christian fellowship, which, according to his
 note in page 44, he does not, we can cordially
 unite with him in reprobating it. *Liberality* and
 candour of his description may exist, as Mr.
 Kentish observes, in harmony with zeal for reli-
 gious principle.

But if *liberality* must incline us to treat errors
 of a moral and religious nature, especially those
 which relate to the gospel way of salvation, as
 mere mistakes of the understanding “in which
 “the will is unconcerned,” it is a kind of virtue
 to which we make no pretence: and if *bigotry*
 consists in the reverse of this, we have no objec-
 tion

tion to be thought bigots, believing as we do, that such bigotry is abundantly recommended in the holy Scriptures.

But, "it is impossible, surely," says my opponent, "that maintaining this opinion, they should regard the man whose religious sentiments differ from theirs, with perfect complacency, satisfaction and benevolence.*" Where then did Mr. Kentish learn to confound "perfect complacency and satisfaction," with "benevolence?" To exercise the former towards characters, who renounce what we consider as the fundamental principles of the gospel, or even towards any man, but *for the truth's sake that dwelleth in him*, is in our esteem sinful: but the latter ought to be exercised towards all mankind, whatever be their principles or characters. I cannot be conscious of another's feelings; but, for my own part, I find no difficulty in this matter arising from my religious principles: and it is a satisfaction to my mind, to see not only the Apostle of the Gentiles ardently desiring the salvation of his countrymen the Jews, but my Lord and Saviour himself weeping over them, while each abhorred both their principles and their practice. If this be a "persecuting" principle, Paul, and even our Saviour, must both have been persecutors.

Mr. Kentish, having thus reviewed the social and personal virtues, calls upon "fair and un-
" biased

"biaſſed obſervation to determine what is the
 "character which they bear in their commerce
 "with mankind." "If," ſays he, "it be not
 "more exemplary than that of other Chriſtians,
 "it is not, perhaps, in any degree, inferior.*"
 Mr. Kentiſh knows very well, that the authori-
 ties from which I drew a contrary concluſion,
 were no other than thoſe of Dr. Prieſtley and
 Mr. Beſham. "It cannot be denied," ſays the
 former, "that many of thoſe who judge ſo truly
 "concerning particular tenets in religion, have
 "attained to that cool unbiaſſed temper of mind
 "in conſequence of becoming more indifferent
 "to religion in general, and to all the modes and
 "doctrines of it."——"Men who are the moſt
 "indifferent to the *practice* of religion," ſays the
 latter, "and whoſe minds therefore are leaſt at-
 "tached to any ſet of principles, will ever be the
 "firſt to ſee the abſurdities of a popular ſuper-
 "ſtition, and to embrace a rational ſyſtem of
 "faith." Such was the method in which theſe
 writers attempted to account for the alleged fact,
 "rational Chriſtians were indifferent to practical
 "religion;" this fact they could not deny; and
 by attempting to *account* for it, they tacitly ad-
 mitted it: yea, Mr. Beſham expreſſly grants that
 "there has been ſome plauſible ground for the
 "accuſation."

To the authority of Dr. Prieſtley, and Mr.
 Beſham, I may now add that of Dr. Toulmin,
 and

and Mr. Kentish. The former, after the example of his predecessors, endeavours to *account* for their "neglecting the culture of the heart and affections;*" and the latter acknowledges, without scruple, that, "with less restraint than is practised by some of their brethren, they enter into the world, and indulge in its amusements.†"

But Mr. Kentish, though he grants the above, denies that there is any thing in it that can be fairly improved to their disadvantage. "Unless it can be shewn," he says, "that we so use the world as to use it to excess, (referring to 1 Cor. vii. 31.) we should take no shame to ourselves on this account." It is worth while to remark the *progress* which our opponents make in matters of morality. Dr. Priestley acknowledged much the same as Mr. Kentish, that "there is a greater apparent conformity to the world in Unitarians than is observable in others;" but he does not undertake to *justify* it: all his attempts is to *account* for it in a way that might reflect no dishonour upon Unitarianism. He represents those amongst them who thus "lean to a life of dissipation," as being only "speculative Unitarians,"—"men of the world,"—and distinguishes them from "serious Christians." And when he comes to weigh the virtue of Trinitarians and Unitarians in a balance, he allows that conformity to the world which is to be found in the

latter, to be a detraction from their excellence; and only pleads that they have other virtues which counter-balance it, or which, "upon the whole," cause their character to "approach nearer to the "proper temper of Christianity than the other.*" Mr. Belsham also, though he speaks of rational Christians as having "often been represented as "indifferent to practical religion;" and admits that "there has been some plausible ground for "the accusation;" yet does not *justify* it, but expresses a hope that it will be "only for a time," and that at length those who give occasion for such accusations will "have their eyes opened, "and feel the benign influence of their principles, and demonstrate the excellency of their "faith by the superior dignity and worth of their "character.†" But how different from all this is the conduct of Mr. Kentish. Dr. Priestley *apologises*; Mr. Belsham *hopes*; but Mr. Kentish, despairing, it should seem, of things growing better, and refusing to "take shame on the account," boldly *justifies* it; yea more, suggests that such conformity to the world is "not only "lawful, but deserving of praise."‡ This is carrying matters with a high hand.

From Dr. Priestley's account of things, one might have supposed, that though there were "great numbers" of these conformists to the world amongst the Unitarians, yet they were a
kind

* *Discourses on various subjects*, page 100.

† *Sermon On the importance of truth*, ‡ Page 32, 8.

kind of excrescence to the body, and distinguishable from it as "men of the world" are distinguishable from "serious Christians:" but according to Mr. Kentish, it is their general character, and they are not ashamed of it; nay, they consider it as "not only lawful, but deserving " of praise!"

That we are allowed, in the passage to which Mr. Kentish refers, to *use this world*, is true: men are allowed to form conjugal connexions, to buy and sell, and to rejoice in all their labour. It is necessary, however, that even these enjoyments should be chastised by an habitual sense of their brevity and uncertainty. That this, or any other passage of Scripture, should be pleaded in favour of an *indulgence in the amusements of the world*, is beyond any thing that I have lately witnessed from the pen of a Christian minister.—My opponent proceeds to his

II. Head of enquiry, viz. "What assistance, support, and consolation, does the Unitarian doctrine afford in the season of temptation, affliction, and death?"

Mr. Kentish here quotes a number of Scriptures which, allowing him his own exposition of them, can scarcely be said to express a single sentiment peculiar to what he calls Unitarianism. His whole aim in this part of his subject seems to be to prove that Unitarians may, by the principles which they hold in common with others, be possessed of something superior to "calmness

“ of mind.” I must say I never saw any thing in any of their writings that appeared to me to bear any tolerable resemblance to the joy of the Gospel. I admit, however, that what I have advanced on this subject might have been better expressed. If, instead of affirming that “ the utmost happiness to which the Socinian scheme “ *pretends* is, calmness of mind,” I had said, the utmost happiness which the peculiar principles of Socinians are adapted to promote is, calmness of mind, it would have been more accurate. My opponent’s being obliged to have recourse to common principles as the springs of joy and consolation, is a sufficient proof that those which are peculiar to his scheme as a Socinian were altogether unadapted to his purpose. He may wish to have it thought, indeed, that Christ’s being “ in all things made like unto his brethren,” and his resurrection being that of *a man*, are terms expressive of his peculiar sentiments. So he insinuates.* But let any person consult the first of these passages,† and he will find, that he who was in all things made like unto his brethren, *took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham*: that is to say, he existed prior to his being a man, and was voluntary in choosing to assume the human rather than the angelic nature. By culling single sentences without taking their connexion, we may prove any thing we please; but in so doing we abuse the Scriptures rather than

* Page 34, 35.

† Heb. ii. 16, 17.

than interpret them. That the resurrection of Christ was the resurrection of *a man*, no one questions; but to infer from hence that he was a *mere man*, is drawing conclusions which are not contained in the premises.

The scheme of our opponents is so far from being adapted to promote evangelical joy, that it leads them in general to despise it as enthusiastical. As an example of this I cited the critique of the *Monthly Reviewers* upon President Edwards's *History of Redemption*: and such examples might be multiplied almost without end. But if men were not strangers to the sacred joys of religion themselves, how is it possible to conceive that they could despise them in others?

The III^d. head of inquiry is next introduced, viz. "What is the degree of efficacy which the Unitarian doctrine possesses, in respect to the conversion of profligates and unbelievers?*" On another occasion Mr. Kentish tells his auditors, that "concerning the natural influence of religious opinions the world will judge, not from abstract reasoning and fancied tendencies, but from our dispositions and our lives;†" that is to say, from facts. But on this subject he has produced neither the one nor the other. "We claim to embrace," he says, "and allow no other doctrine than what Jesus and his Apostles taught.‡" True; but the question is, if their claim be admissible, how comes it to pass that

P 2

their

* Page 35.

† Page 46.

‡ Page 36.

their doctrine has no better effect? Mr. Kentish answers, "The fact is to be explained by the prevalence of human corruptions." Is it a fact then that men are more corrupt amongst Socinians than in those congregations where the doctrine of atonement through the blood of Christ is taught and believed?

But perhaps what we call conversion will not be admitted by our opponents as genuine. "We reject," says Mr. Kentish, "and reason and the Scriptures we think authorize us to reject, every pretence to sudden conversion. True conversion from sin to holiness we regard as the work of time and labour." If it were necessary to examine this subject, the conversion pleaded for by Mr. Kentish might appear as mean in our esteem, as ours does in his. But I desire no other criterion of true conversion in this case than that by which *the end is accomplished*. Where I see a man turned from sin to holiness, I call him a converted man. That such a change is sometimes gradual, is admitted; but this is not always the case: neither was it in the primitive ages. I know very well that Dr. Priestley, as well as Mr. Kentish, considers all sudden changes as nugatory, and supposes that conversion is a work of time and labour. Upon this principle he affirms that "All late repentance, especially after long and confirmed habits of vice, is absolutely and necessarily ineffectual." That our opponents should imbibed such an opinion, has nothing surprising

prising in it; but that they should pretend that the "Scriptures authorize it," is somewhat extraordinary. Was not the repentance of Zaccheus, and that of the thief upon the cross, a late repentance, and yet effectual? Was the repentance of either of them the effect of long time and labour? Were the Jews under Peter's sermon, the Jailor and his household, or any others of whom there is an account in the Acts of the Apostles, converted in the manner Mr. Kentish describes? If however the whole that was to be attributed to God in this change were no more than Mr. Kentish supposes; if it consisted merely in his furnishing us with "the powers of willing and acting," it might well be considered as a work of time and labour; or rather as a work that time in its utmost extent would never be able to accomplish.

But what end has Mr. Kentish to answer by his objecting to sudden conversion, and representing it as a work of time and labour? Does he mean to suggest that their doctrine has not yet had time to operate? If not, what difference does it make to the argument? We call nothing conversion amongst us but that in which a change of disposition and life appears; and if this end were accomplished amongst them in any considerable degree, whether it were suddenly or gradually, he need not be at a loss for facts to support the efficacy of his doctrine. Instead of these, Mr. Kentish is obliged to content himself with *assert-*
ing,

ing, that "Repentance towards God, and faith
 " towards our Lord Jesus Christ, rightly under-
 " stood, have as intimate a connexion with their
 " views of the Christian dispensation as with those
 " of their brethren."—And with *hoping* that
 " There are those in their number who have found
 " the plain, the simple, yet the despised Gospel
 " of Christ, the power of God unto salvation."

I shall not controvert the remarks of my oppo-
 nent respecting the Jews, and respecting unbe-
 lievers who reside in a Christian country. It is
 true, as he observes, " little can be said on either
 " side, inasmuch as the experiment has never,
 " perhaps, been fairly and entirely made by both
 " the parties." Meanwhile, I perfectly acquiesce
 in the observation that " Eventually, without
 " doubt, that representation of Christianity which
 " has Scripture, and," it may be, " antiquity for
 " it's basis; which is simple in it's nature, and
 " conformable to our best ideas of the Divine
 " character and government, will every where
 " prevail."

On the subject of *missions to the Heathen*, I have
 only to observe, that if other Socinian writers had
 said nothing worse than Mr. Kentish, my remarks
 on that subject would not have appeared.

IV. And lastly, Mr. Kentish proceeds to con-
 sider " How far the admission of Unitarian doc-
 " trine is adapted to promote a veneration for
 " the Scriptures, and to fortify our faith in Chris-
 " tianity.

“ tianity.*” The principle which I assumed at the outset of my enquiry on this subject was this, “ If any man venerate the authority of Scripture, “ he must receive it AS BEING WHAT IT PROFFESSES “ TO BE, AND FOR ALL THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH “ IT PROFFESSES TO BE WRITTEN. If the Scriptures “ profess to be divinely inspired, and assume to “ be the infallible standard of faith and practice, “ we must either receive them as such, or, if we “ would be consistent, disown the writers as impostors.” After stating this principle as the ground or datum of the argument, I proceeded to examine into the *professions* of the sacred writers. Now I would ask Mr. Kentish whether the above position be not unobjectionable as a ground of argument? Has it not the property which every ground of argument ought to possess, that of being admitted or admissible by both parties? And if so, why has he not joined issue upon it? I have no inclination to “ view my opponent with the “ eye of jealousy and suspicion;†” but what motive can be assigned for his passing over this ground, and substituting in the place of it such a definition of veneration for the Scriptures as leaves out the ideas of *inspiration and infallibility*? It is true he has used the former of these terms, but it is manifest that he considers the Apostles in no other light than honest, well informed historians. “ To venerate the Scriptures,” says he, “ is to receive and value them as containing a “ revelation

“ revelation of the will of God to man ; it is to
 “ investigate them with diligence and impar-
 “ tiality, to interpret them fairly and consistent-
 “ ly, to be guided by the natural, plain, and
 “ uniform sense of them in articles of faith and
 “ on points of conduct.—Then it should seem
 “ do we entertain a just and correct view of their
 “ inspiration, when we regard them as the writ-
 “ ings of men who derived from the very best
 “ sources of information their acquaintance with
 “ the history and doctrine of Christ, of men
 “ whose integrity is beyond all question, of men
 “ who credibly relate facts and discourses which
 “ either themselves witnessed, or which they de-
 “ liver on the authority of the spectators and the
 “ hearers, and who faithfully teach that word of
 “ God with a knowledge of which they were fur-
 “ nished by their master and by miraculous com-
 “ munications subsequent to his ascension.*”

Whether this representation sufficiently ex-
 presses a proper veneration for the Scriptures is
 itself a matter of dispute. It is therefore very
 improper for a ground of argument, and espe-
 cially for being substituted in the place of a po-
 sition that was liable to no objection from any
 quarter. Why did not Mr. Kentish admit my
 general position, that “ If any man venerate the
 “ authority of Scripture, HE MUST RECEIVE IT AS
 “ BEING WHAT IT PROFESSES TO BE, AND FOR ALL
 “ THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH IT PROFESSES TO BE
 “ WRITTEN ;”

"WRITTEN;" and why did he not on this ground join issue in an examination of the *professions* of the sacred writers? Such a conduct would have been fair and manly; but that which Mr. Kentish has substituted in the place of it, is evasive, and unworthy of a candid reasoner.

Mr. Kentish having given us his *opinion* of the inspiration of the Scriptures, and the veneration that is due to them, thus concludes, "If this be
"to venerate the Scriptures, our principles, I
"must be allowed to think, are far indeed from
"being unfriendly to such veneration.*" What does this conclusion amount to more than this, That if his notions of divine inspiration may be admitted as a standard; why, then their veneration for the Scriptures will be found, at least in his opinion, to come up to it! Assuredly the question was not, whether the veneration which our opponents exercise towards the Scriptures be such as corresponds with *their own notions* of their inspiration; but whether it agrees with the veneration which the *Scriptures themselves* require. Mr. Kentish must excuse me if I remind him of the resemblance of his conduct to that of persons who *measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves amongst themselves, are not wise.*

But further, I am not sure that Mr. Kentish's conclusion will follow even from his own premises. There is so much disrespect discovered in the writings of our opponents towards the

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holy Scriptures, of which I have attempted to give evidence in my XIIth. Letter, that even upon Mr. Kentish's own professed views, they come miserably short of veneration. Mr. Kentish acknowledges that veneration "consists in being guided by the natural, plain, and uniform sense of them, in articles of faith, and on points of conduct:" but the *Monthly Reviewers* assert, that "the nature and design of the Scriptures is not to settle disputed theories, nor to decide on controverted questions even in religion and morality—that they are intended not so much to make us wiser, as to make us better; not to solve the doubts, but rather to make us obey the dictates of our consciences.*" And how are all the subtractions of Dr. Priestley to be reconciled with Mr. Kentish's criterion of veneration? He supposes the sacred penmen to have written upon subjects "to which they had not given much attention, and concerning which they were not possessed of sufficient means of information."—Mr. Kentish, it is true, may not be accountable for the assertions of the *Monthly Reviewers*, or of Dr. Priestley; but then his conclusions should have been more confined: instead of affirming that "if this be to venerate the Scriptures, their principles are far from being unfriendly to such veneration,"—he should only have asserted it with respect to *his own*.

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* Review Enlarged, Vol. X. p. 357.

My opponent proceeds—" But if reverence
" of these sacred records of our faith—is to be
" manifested by a dread of examining them, lest
" their doctrines be found in contradiction to
" our present opinions, or by a blind acquiescence
" in the unavoidable inaccuracies of transcribers,
" and in the no less unavoidable, but more injurious, errors of translators, or by a bigoted
" opposition to every attempt toward an improved knowledge and version of them, or by
" judging of the truths which they teach rather
" from the sound of detached passages, than from
" the signification and tenor of the context, such
" reverence we disclaim. Sincerely attached to
" the sacred volume, against such reverence we
" steadfastly protest.*"

But how if reverence to these sacred records should *not* consist in a dread of examining them, or in a blind acquiescence in the inaccuracies of transcribers, or the errors of translators, or in a bigoted opposition to any attempt toward an improved knowledge or version of them, or in judging of the truths which they teach rather from the sound of detached passages, than from the signification and tenor of the context—how if this should prove to be a kind of reverence for which Mr. Kentish's opponent does not plead any more than himself—and how if our objections should not be against examination, but against the conclusions which some persons draw; not against

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correcting, but corrupting the translation; not against attending to the scope of the writers, but against torturing them to speak contrary to their real intentions—will it not follow in this case that this “steadfast protest” is against a non-entity, and that this mighty triumph is over a man of straw?

It is a usual way of writing, first to lay down a proposition, and then to establish it by evidence. In this manner I have generally proceeded. Mr. Kentish, in quoting my language, has more than once taken simply the proposition, taking no notice of the evidence by which it is supported, and then accused me of dealing in peremptory assertions.* Such is his conduct in reference to what I have written on the tendency of Socinianism to Infidelity.† Mr. Kentish is welcome to call the positions which I have advanced “calumny,” or by what other name he pleases; let but the evidence with which they are supported be considered in connexion with them, and if they will not stand the test of examination, let them share the fate they deserve.

As to what my opponent alleges concerning what it is that denominates any one a professing Christian, and his appeal to the Acts of the Apostles,‡ I have already said what I judge necessary on that subject in my reply to Dr. Toulmin, where also I have adduced some additional evidence of the tendency of Socinianism to Deism.

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* See p. 29, 35. † Page 40. note. ‡ Page 41.

I have only one more remark to make on Mr. Kentish—It respects the meaning of our Lord's words in John xiv. 28. *My Father is greater than I.* The sense which has commonly been put upon this passage both by Trinitarians and Anti-trinitarians appears to me to be beside the scope of the writer; nor is that of Mr. Kentish in my judgment more plausible. I agree with him “ that “ it is not the mere abstract doctrine of his Father's superiority which he designed to assert ;” or rather, I think, that it expresses no comparison whatever between the *person* of the Father and that of the Son. The comparison appears evidently, to me, to respect *the state of exaltation with the Father, and the state of humiliation* which he then sustained. *If ye loved me, saith he, ye would rejoice because I said I go to the Father; for my Father is greater than I.*—The glory and happiness which my Father possesses, and which I go to possess with him, is greater than any thing I can here enjoy: your love to me, therefore, if it were properly regulated, instead of prompting you to wish to detain me here, would rather incline you to rejoice in my departure.*

But though I disagree with Mr. Kentish in his sense of this passage of Scripture, I perfectly agree with him in the general sentiment with which he concludes his performance, that “ the “ season may not be far distant, when systems “ which assume the Christian name, shall, like “ fabrics

* See CALVIN and HENRY upon the place.

“ fabrics erected upon the sand, be overthrown
 “ by a mighty fall”——but “ that real Christi-
 “ anity has nothing to fear.” And I may add,
 that it is with sacred satisfaction I anticipate the
 time, when all that exalteth itself against Christ,
 let it affect whose systems it may, shall utterly
 fall, and nothing shall be left standing but the
 simple, unadulterated doctrine of the cross.

I shall conclude my reply to both Dr. Toul-
 min and Mr. Kentish, with a brief *Review of the*
Reviewers. What has fallen under my observa-
 tion is contained in the *Monthly* and *Analytical*
Reviews, and the *Protestant Dissenters' Magazine*.

In the *Monthly Review Enlarged*, my oppo-
 nents had reason to expect, not merely a friend
 and patron, but a respectable and powerful ally.
 The managers of that work were parties in the
 controversy ; as much so as Dr. Priestley, or Mr.
 Belfham, or Mr. Lindsey, or Mrs. Barbauld.
 They were called upon, either to defend their
 allegations, or to relinquish them. But, like the
 late Empress of the North, by the allies, they
 have been a long time in raising their quota, and
 at last have mustered up about half a dozen lines !
 In these lines, which are given in a Review of
 Mr. Kentish's sermon, they have, with a design
 sufficiently apparent, preserved a sullen silence
 respecting the piece which gave occasion for it.
 “ From an impartial perusal of this sensible and
 “ well written discourse,” they tell us, “ the
 “ candid reader may perhaps apprehend that the
 “ important

“ important objects of piety and virtue may be
 “ advanced on the Unitarian plan, although he
 “ should not himself embrace it.*”

Brief, cautious, and sullen as this review may appear, it is the best that my opponents can either of them boast. It is true, it contains merely *opinion*, and that is expressed in very general terms; but herein, for ought I know, may consist its excellency. The other Reviewers, as the reader will presently perceive, by descending to particulars, and attempting to back their opinion with *reasoning*, have ruined the cause, and injured those whom it was their intention to serve.

The *Analytical Review* of Dr. Toulmin's performance † is too long for insertion here. The substance of it amounts to no more than this, *that the ground on which I have conducted the controversy is not a fair one.* But this implies a reflection upon the wisdom of Dr. Toulmin, for pretending to meet me upon this ground; and a still greater reflection upon Mr. Kentish, for engaging upon it, and acknowledging that, “ in
 “ religion, the maxim, *ye shall know them by their*
 “ *fruits*, is a maxim unquestionably of high au-
 “ thority, evident reason, and familiar applica-
 “ tion:” yea, more, that it is a criterion, “ by
 “ which the world will judge concerning the na-
 “ tural influence of our religious opinions.” It also implies a conviction on the part of the Reviewer, that *his cause is lost.* Like a second in a
 duel,

* Review for January 1797, page 118, Art. 74.

† For October 1796, p. 394—396.

duel, he informs the world that it is no wonder his friend has fallen, for he fought upon unfair ground!

If this review has been of any use to Dr. Toulmin, it is by an attempt to *cover his retreat*. By raising an outcry against the professed ground of the controversy, a kind of apology is formed for its being *shifted*, and the reader's attention is insensibly turned off from the Doctor's false reasoning, and reconciled to what he has advanced, foreign to the subject from the Acts of the Apostles. But whatever service might be afforded by this, it is all undone by what follows: for after having raised an outcry against reasoning on the ground of moral tendency, he discovers *an inclination to make the utmost use of it that he is able*. As Dr. Toulmin, notwithstanding his shifting the ground of the argument, has no objection to exhibit all the morality on his side, that he can muster up; so neither has the Analytical Reviewer any objection to repeat it after him. The one can tell of their virtuous individuals, and the other can echo the account, though both ought to have known, that it is not from the character of individuals, but of the *general body*, that I proposed to reason.

If the critique of the Analytical Review be weak, that in the *Protestant Dissenters' Magazine* is still weaker. This Reviewer observes, that "the method Dr. Toulmin has taken to shew
" the moral tendency of Unitarian principles is
" plain

“ plain and solid ; it is one recommended by his
 “ antagonist, an appeal to *facts*. He examines
 “ every specimen of apostolical preaching re-
 “ corded in the Acts of the Apostles, each of
 “ which he endeavours to shew is in unison with
 “ Unitarian sentiments. From this the infe-
 “ rence is very clear, that the world was con-
 “ verted, and the finners of mankind were
 “ brought to faith and repentance by the preach-
 “ ing of the simple Unitarian doctrine ; directly
 “ contrary to what Mr. Fuller has advanced,
 “ that ‘ Socinian writers cannot pretend that their
 ‘ doctrine has been used to convert profligate
 ‘ finners to the love of God and holiness.’ ”*

Dr. Toulmin has appealed to *facts*, and it seems the writer of this article does not know but that they were *facts in point*. That they are not so, must be evident on the slightest reflection : for they can be of no use to Dr. Toulmin, unless he first prove that the Apostles were of his sentiments ; and if this be proved, they can be of no use afterwards, because the point in question is supposed to be decided without them. Whether Dr. Toulmin was aware of this, I shall not pretend to determine : it is evident, however, that his affecting to join issue in an appeal to facts,† has every property of a *feint*, or of an attempt to keep up the appearance of a regular pitched battle, while in reality he was effecting a retreat. But whatever may be thought of Dr. Toul-

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min's acquaintedness or unacquaintedness with what he was doing, this writer appears to know nothing of the matter. He does not know that the Doctor's repairing to the primitive Christians for examples of the conversion of profligates to the love of God and holiness, instead of proving "the direct contrary" to what I had affirmed, affords the strongest confirmation of it. It did not occur to him, it seems, that if Dr. Toulmin could have found, or pretended to find, examples *near home*, *he would not have gone to so great a distance in search of them.*

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